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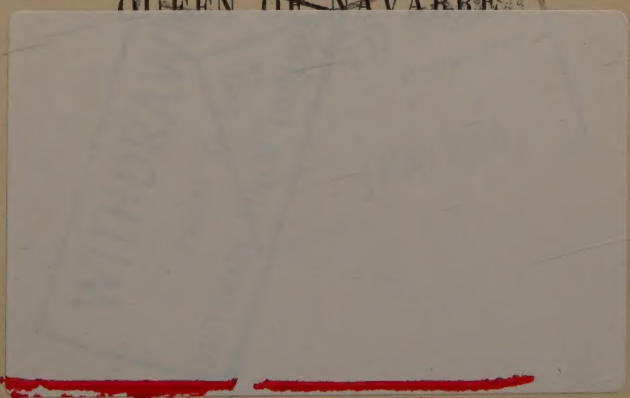
MARGARET OF ANGOULÊME

QUEEN OF NAVARRE



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MARGARET OF ANGOULÊME

QUEEN OF NAVARRE

BY

A. MARY F. ROBINSON

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PREFACE.

The sixteenth century, that age of great women, shows few more truly eminent than the sister of Francis I. Margaret of Angoulême, of Valois, and of France, Queen of Navarre, Duchess of Alençon and Berry, was a person of importance in many different ways. In political influence, she was, perhaps, excelled by Margaret of Austria, Catherine dei Medici, and Elizabeth of England; and Elizabeth, if not more devoted, was at least more successful as a reformer of Religion. But the Queen of Navarre possessed many qualities foreign to these famous names. Of all the women of her age, Vittoria Colonna alone was her rival in literary attainments; and in the rarer and more illustrious authority of personal grace and charm, she was unequalled save by Mary Queen of Scots, or the magical Diana of Poictiers.

The student of character may find another interest in the sweet, dense, simple spirit of Margaret—a comparatively trifling and unreal nature by the side of the vehement and audacious personages of her time, but which, none the less, directed them, influenced them, and checked their headlong course, in the same manner

as the youthful character of Raphael maintained an unceasing authority over the wilder spirits of his school.

It is in her influence that we must seek the prestige of the Queen of Navarre, and not in her faded literary laurels, or in a personality rather interesting than great. It was she who inspired the College of France; it was she who protected and guaranteed the Renaissance in France from the ignorant rage of the Sorbonne. She was, in Melancthon's phrase, the Divinity of the great religious movement of her time, and the upholder of the mere natural rights of humanity in an age that only respected opinions.

It is thus, as an organic part of the history of her time, as an influence, as an inspiring spirit, that I have tried to depict her, and not as a sequestered individual. The task is intricate and large, and the space given me to fill is very narrow. But, so far as it goes, this little sketch may, perhaps, be of some service in indicating the movements of the earlier French Renaissance. I have tried to make it, as far as possible, correct. I have, in most instances, sought my facts in the many published volumes of original documents, rather than in any subsequent history; and where I have given an unusual date, it is, I hope, most often because recent research has disproved the earlier reading.

Recent research, ever so commendably critical and untiring in France, has happily disproved many last-century scandals, and one revived not many years ago. M. Lutteroth, in a Review called *Le Semeur*, and

M. le Comte de la Ferrière, in his introduction to the *Account-Book of the Queen of Navarre,* have, with others, satisfactorily proved that a certain compromising letter, which tradition gave to the year 1521, must be dated as 1525, the year of Margaret's hurried flight from Spain; in which circumstances, as will be seen, the construction to be placed upon it involves no shade of censure.

No doubt some confusion with the gay and brilliant Reine Margot, queen of many lovers, has been the origin of the unfounded scandals which haunt the memory of the earlier Margaret. For the younger princess was also Margaret of Valois and of France, also the wife of a Henry, King of Navarre. Moreover, Brantôme wrote of our heroine, "*En fait de galanterie, elle en sçavoit plus que de son pain quotidien.*" But we must remember that, in Brantôme's eyes, the sense of intrigue and of amours was by no means the only sense of *galanterie,* which signified, indeed—as properly it still should do—rather gentility, courteous and magnanimous behaviour, chivalry, and pleasing address. No phrase could be more suited to Margaret, the generous Egeria of two royal courts, the story-teller *par excellence* of her age, whose palace at Nérac assumed the double aspect of an asylum for persecuted scholars and a refined and spiritual Court of Love.

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MARGARET OF ANGOULÊME,
QUEEN OF NAVARRE.

CHAPTER I.

(1491–1515.)

CHILDHOOD AND MARRIAGE.

When Louisa of Savoy, beautiful, accomplished, barely fifteen years old, was given in marriage to Charles of Orleans, Count of Angoulême, it can have seemed no brilliant alliance on her part. The bridegroom was twenty years older than the bride, of fallen fortunes, and banished from the Court of France. That he was a possible heir to the Crown can only have counted as a splendid piece of heraldry, for the young king, Charles VIII., was newly wedded to Anne of Brittany, and his sister's husband, the heir-presumptive, was a vigorous young man of nine-and-twenty, likely to live long and have many children.

These two young lives stood between the Crown and the Count of Angoulême. It was not likely that he, delicate, gentle, fastidious, should outlive them. But

the Count's position as a possible heir made him an honourable match, though poor, for the girlish Princess of Savoy. Her father sanctioned the marriage gladly. Louisa's mother was dead, and he had children by his second wife. He was willing to marry his elder daughter honourably and without expense. On her marriage he gave with her a dowry of 35,000 livres—a small sum, considering that her mother had been a very wealthy heiress. But Philip of Savoy, with several children to endow, and a throne ever threatened by the surrounding kingdoms, had many uses for his money. The Count of Angoulême, for his part, assigned the Castles of Cognac and Romorantin to Louisa, and these were to remain to her as dower-houses in the event of her widowhood. Finally, all affairs being settled, Charles of Orleans, in the year 1491, was married to his youthful bride.

The Count went with his wife to live on his property in Angoulême. From the French Court he was debarred by the King's displeasure, for the reason that long ago he had joined the rebellion of Brittany. It was no punishment to Charles to live a country life. His gentle and quiet tastes, his benevolence, his gift for organization, all were employed and satisfied in the orderly routine of managing a great property. He had his reward in peaceful years and in the loving devotion of his tenantry. But such a life might easily have wearied a beautiful child of fifteen, exceedingly accomplished, a princess, brilliant, and fond of power. There was, however, in Louisa's nature a passionate capacity for devotion. This, in fact, is the key-note of her life. She fell in love, deeply and all-sufficingly, with her courteous, elderly husband: the banishment in which he shone delighted her; the

delicate chivalry of his character won her passionate approval. At this age she must have been a beautiful girl, with aquiline features, in which the latent coarseness was as yet undeveloped, dark, with an ardent Italian air. She knew a little Latin, and was fond of quoting it; she was well and widely read in French, and could speak several modern languages; there were few better instructed princesses in Europe. Her manners at this time were gentle and submissive, for she had voluntarily bowed herself under the yoke of an impassioned reverence. The violent ambition of her later years was still unguessed and latent in her soul.

Charles and his bride spent the first year of their marriage in the Castle of Angoulême, and there, in the following spring, their eldest child was born. In the Journal in which, later on, Louisa noted the great events of her life, she thus records the date:—

"My daughter Margaret was born in the year 1492, the eleventh day of April, at two o'clock in the morning, that is to say, the tenth day, fourteen hours and ten minutes, counting after the fashion of the astronomers."

As the little girl grew out of babyhood, people noticed that her mother's aquiline features were softened in her face by the look and smile of her gentle father, and that in her character his delicate and benevolent nature qualified the love of learning and capacity for devotion which her mother gave her. More intense than he, more refined and unworldly than Louisa, the little Margaret displayed a singular and beautiful personality. The young Countess was very proud of her and, almost from her cradle, began to cultivate the sensitive intelligence of the child. But, while Margaret was still little more than a baby, a

more important personage appeared upon the scene, one who henceforth should be the very centre of existence both to Margaret and to her mother.

"Francis, by the grace of God, King of France, and my pacific Cæsar, took his first experience of earthly light at Congnac, about ten hours after noon, the twelfth day of September 1494."

So triumphantly runs Louisa's journal. But the next entry sobers all that joy :—

"The first day of January 1496 I lost my husband."

An intermittent fever, common and fatal in those days of imperfect drainage, carried off the Count of Angoulême at forty, and left Louisa a widow in her twentieth year. For some weeks it appeared as though her two little children might be left utterly desolate, for, broken down with long nursing and a most bitter sorrow, the young Countess fell seriously ill. She was, however, too young, too vigorous, to die of grief. She recovered, finding in her children sufficient motive for existence. Retiring to her dower-house of Romorantin, Louisa busied herself in training Margaret. This girl she intended to become the most accomplished princess of her age. Madame de Chatillon, a lady of great learning, rank, and virtue, was engaged as governess to the young princess, and scholars of note were employed to instruct her in Latin, in philosophy, and in divinity. But if Louisa cared so well for her daughter, yet more absolutely was she engrossed by the future of her infant son. Her passionate heart, left empty by her husband's death, gave harbour to an unrestrained ambition, and her dreams began early to fulfil themselves. On the 6th April 1498 the young King died childless, and his childless brother-in-law, Louis, Duke of Orleans, succeeded him, under the title of

Louis XII. These events made the little boy at Romorantin heir-presumptive to the throne of France.

But Louis was anxious to leave a nearer heir. He divorced his faithful, ugly wife, the crippled daughter of Louis XI., and espoused Anne of Brittany, the beautiful Queen Dowager, whom he had desired to marry in his early youth. Anne and Louisa were implacable at heart. The stern little Breton Queen was as obstinate as the Countess, but far more sedate: determined, ambitious, and secret. She had a great contempt for Louisa's violent aspirations; a very rigid Catholic, she looked with misliking on the free speech and wide reading of the young Countess of Angoulême. But King Louis was resolved to be friends with his handsome cousin and her children. It was, indeed, to Louisa's Castle of Romorantin that Anne repaired to await her first confinement. With what strenuous prayer and hope, and with what humiliating fear, that event was awaited, only those can understand who have sounded the deep, inexorable rivalry between these two women. On the 13th of October 1499 the child was born. It was a daughter, the Princess Claude of France. "*Elle fut née en ma maison,*" writes Louisa in her diary. From that moment she determined the little girl should marry her boy Francis, and not some powerful foreign prince, who might forcibly break the Salic law. Naturally Anne was of a contrary opinion.

The Queen was young, was of Louisa's own age, three-and-twenty. A son might be born to her to mock all Louisa's hopes and dreams. From this intense expectation neither one nor the other of these women was ever free. But the years went on, and no male child was given to Anne; then, one crucial morning, a

son was born, but, writes Louisa in her journal, with an almost savage triumph, "he could not retard the exaltation of my Cæsar, for he had no life." Sharp anxiety and goading ambition had so changed by this time the gentle wife of Charles of Angoulême.

Louisa brought up her son as befitted a king. Her castle of Romorantin was scarcely large enough to hold the court and retinue of the young heir of France, and for this purpose the beautiful palace of Amboise was assigned to her by the King. As years went on, Louis grew to regard the young Count of Angoulême as his heir, and, despite the bitter jealousy of Queen Anne, he loved the boy, and treated him with care and kindness. He created Francis Duke of Valois; he consulted the child's taste with fatherly foresight; and when his young cousin came to court, Louis had the royal park filled with deer and game, so that Francis might not be debarred from his favourite pleasure of the chase.

Meanwhile, at Amboise, Francis was educated with the greatest nobles of France. Of these boy-companions, five, in especial, were to become conspicuous in the history of his life. Gaston de Foix, the King's nephew, "the thunderbolt of Italy" as people learned to call him, who, ten years later, in the flower of his youth, should perish in the moment of victory on the desolate Ravenna marshes. The light-hearted Bonnivet, Margaret's too daring lover, killed at Pavia. The brilliant and gay Philippe Brion, Sieur de Chabot, so often favoured and disgraced by Francis in later years. And, a more potent influence, Anne de Montmorency, the determined, stern, narrow-hearted boy, on whom his godmother, the Breton Queen, seemed to have bestowed her pure and relentless nature with

her name. Lastly, the unfortunate Charles de Montpensier, the Bourbon cadet, whose passionate vindictive character and tragic Italian face betrayed the Gonzaga adventurer that doubled this French noble.

These boys were taught all things that befit young princes. Latin, courtly languages, hunting, the dance (music was as yet in embryo, a mere thrum of the lute or burr of the organ), jousting, tennis, tilting at the ring, fencing, and wrestling. At all their games there was one deeply interested looker on, one whom all strove to please, the Queen of the little court; this was Mademoiselle d'Angoulême.

At this time there was some talk of affiancing the little girl to the young Prince of Wales, afterwards Henry of England, eighth of the name. King Louis sent an embassy to the English court; Henry VII. despatched a special envoy to Paris; but though the English ambassador reported the little Princess "*très belle et fort saige de son aage*," nothing came of these negotiations. For Henry declared that though a daughter of Louis would be the alliance nearest to his heart, yet, while the King and Queen were still so young and vigorous, he could not consider Mademoiselle d'Angoulême as sister to the heir of France.

Nevertheless, with every day Francis became more evidently the heir, and at Plessis, on May 22nd, 1507, he married the little girl born at his mother's castle, in order to unite her inheritance of Brittany and Orleans with the crown. This was ample recognition, and yet the triumph of Louisa was not all sweetness, for we find her writing in her journal: "The 3rd August 1508, my son went from Amboise to live at court, and left me all alone."

Within the year the little Charles of Spain sent an

embassy to King Louis, requesting the hand of Mademoiselle d'Angoulême. This would have been a far more brilliant alliance than the English match, and Louisa would gladly have given her consent. But the King refused. Perhaps he thought it dangerous to wed a French princess with the natural rival of France; very probably Anne, who still counted on Charles for some yet unborn daughter of her own, persuaded him not to break her heart and grant this second triumph to her rival. The heir of Spain was dismissed, and Queen Anne selected a very different bridegroom, more suitable in years, but not at all in spirit. This was Charles of Alençon, first Prince of the Blood, a duke with power of life and death in his duchy, almost a petty sovereign. He was a handsome, dull, inefficient youth of twenty, without ideas or presence, and of a brooding and jealous temper. There was, however, no ground for rejecting the choice of the Queen, eager to humiliate her insatiable rival. The Duke of Alençon was an honourable match for Mademoiselle d'Angoulême. Descended from that Charles I. of Valois who was made Count of Alençon by his brother Philip the Fair, Monsieur d'Alençon came of a house which for two centuries had been glorious and quasi-royal. And yet he was stupid and mean of spirit; a sad mate for the gay, brilliant, mystical girl he was to marry, whose tender radiance and smile of wistful rapture deserved a happier destiny. It was also a profound disappointment to Louisa that, having refused the King of Spain, her pearl of princesses should be given to a simple duke. Yet this came to pass—Margaret obediently suffering her dismal fate. So, for a while, mother and children were divided. Francis, living in impatient restraint at court; Louisa,

filling her craving heart with infinite ambitions in her childless castle at Cognac; Margaret, unhappy, dispirited, drooping in her husband's palace at Alençon, far from the gaiety, the cultured intercourse, the love and happiness to which she had been accustomed all her life.

Margaret was now seventeen years old. She was not beautiful, but very charming. She was tall, graceful of carriage, slim and delicate in air. Her thick blonde hair was hidden away under a black coif; and this fashion gave a certain severity to her long pale face. The eyes, blue and expressive, smiled sweetly under arching brows. Her nose was the long, large nose of Francis, but more delicate and irregular in her, with a sort of ripple in it. She had a little, neatly rounded chin, and a very sweet mouth, with a wistful pathetic smile, well knowing the way "*dire Nenny avec un doux sourire.*" Yet, despite her pensive countenance, she was—we have her word for it—"*de moult joyeuse vie, quoique toutefois femme de bien.*"

At Alençon, alas! there was no joyous life. The Duke, gloomy, jealous, mediocre, interested merely in the details of his estate, was a respectable youth, but not the man to make a Margaret happy. She pursued her studies as the one means of escape from this irksome existence. Madame de Chatillon, her governess, had accompanied the young Duchess as first Lady of Honour. Under her direction, doubtless, Margaret began to give more and more of her attention to her favourite study of Divinity. Her mystical, indefinite mind was attracted towards religious speculation, and Madame de Chatillon was well acquainted with the New Ideas then already beginning to stir the soul

of France. This lady was, in later years, suspected of Lutheranism, and it was said that she had secretly married the innovating Cardinal du Bellay. But as yet Lutheranism did not exist. She and her pupil, however, had gone forth to seek it.

Meanwhile, Louisa was perplexed with more earthly anxieties. In 1510 the nation became aware that a new heir might be expected to the Crown of France. These were months of exultation to Queen Anne, while Louisa understood how terribly all her ambitions would be overthrown should a royal prince be born. In October a little girl came into the world: Madame Renée de France. Then for a moment the anxiety of Louisa was appeased. But a worse trial was in store. The Queen never recovered that disappointment. Three years afterwards she died; and Louisa discovered that the death of her enemy had brought a new and terrible evil upon her. Nine months after the death of Anne, the King, who had mourned her with little less than frenzy, married Mary, the beautiful young sister of the English King. Louisa's hatred for this new rival, and her contempt for the King, are manifest even in the meagre lines of her diary.

"The 22nd September, King Louis XII., very old and feeble (*fort antique et debile*), went out of Paris to meet his young wife Queen Mary.

"The 9th October, was held the amorous wedding of Louis, King of France, and Mary of England.

"The 3rd day of November 1514, before eleven o'clock, I arrived at Paris, and the self-same day, without resting, I was advised to go and salute Queen Mary at Saint Denis, and I left Paris at three o'clock with a great number of gentlemen.

"The 5th of November 1514, Queen Mary was

crowned at Saint Denis, and the sixth day made her entry into Paris."

Then the journal no longer chronicles the triumphs of a rival.

"The first day of November 1515, my son was King of France."

CHAPTER II.

(1515–1520.)

THE YOUNG KING AND HIS RIVALS.

While the young Queen sat in her chamber, reading her missal, submitting to her mother-in-law, and embroidering red silken counterpanes, the Duchess of Alençon queened it over the court of France, the brilliant Egeria of half-a-dozen poets. For Claude, although the wife and daughter of a king, was none the less a quiet, narrow-chested girl, fifteen years old, gentle, pious, and awkward, with neat, pure features and smooth-braided hair that had no special charm or grace. Francis, with his ideas of splendour and chivalry, desired a different queen for his sumptuous court. And her he found in Margaret, a woman then of three-and-twenty, both learned and witty, and with a charm more attractive than beauty in her slender carriage and tender smile—Margaret, young, *de moult joyeuse vie, et la meilleure compagnie possible.* Margaret was virtually the Queen of France.

Hers was a dangerous although an honourable position. She was young, and, under the spell of that sweet pale face, that abundant soft blonde hair, her brother's courtiers called her the most beautiful of

women. She was unhappily married, and possessed neither love nor esteem for her husband. She ruled without scruple the laxest court of Europe. Yet, singular among the women of that court, the Duchess of Alençon never had a lover.

The virtue of the young Princess, gay as she seemed, was quite secure. She looked on all her would-be lovers with a sweet, remote ironical compassion, and turned away to seek her books again. She had an almost pedantic love of learning; theology, grammar, classics, romances, she gave them each a share of the curiosity and interest with which she envisaged life. All these tastes and qualities helped to secure her virtue; but even greater than they as a safeguard we must place her absolute, unrivalled devotion to her brother.

It was the fashion then at court for people of quality to select a motto or device expressing their personality. Duchess Margaret was clever at making these posies; she supplied them to her brother, to his mistress, to half-a-dozen others. For herself, she selected a sunflower turning to the sun, and underneath she wrote, "*Non inferiora secutus.*" The phrase is exact; no lower light did she ever follow, no wandering glory led her from the worship of that sun of hers. Through all history, I think, we never come again upon a devotion sustained so long and at so high a pitch as this of Margaret d'Angoulême for her brother. And this idolatry demanded many sacrifices. She was to offer it her life and her constant service, the interests of her husband, the happiness of her child. She offered it her judgment, almost her conscience. And for his sake, in her middle age, already weary of the world, she should forsake the mystical meditation in which she

delighted, to compose the *Heptameron* to please him in his illness.

Louisa of Savoy was scarcely less devoted. As great a love and ambition filled her heart, but was met and thwarted there by other passions, by intenser personal cravings. She was not like Margaret, a sunflower, seeing only one object, turning only to that. She was a passionate, personal, violent woman—eager for love, eager for money, eager for power, yet subordinating these intense desires to her motherly ambition. Her passion was as strong as Margaret's devotion. Both these women lived only for the glory of Francis. Let us see of what stuff this idol was made.

There is, I believe, no good portrait of Francis in his youthful manhood. The face so familiar to us is of a later date: a dreadful face, with its sly and carnal look, the long coarse nose, and full voluptuous mouth. It seems as if some pressure of blood on the brain weighed down the eyelids over those small and narrow eyes, and inflamed those florid cheeks, over which the coarse dark hair falls down. A dreadful face truly—apoplectic, sensual, indifferent, cunning. But, from the frequent contemporary representations of the Field of the Cloth of Gold, we can believe that in 1520 the King looked different from this. Still slender, tall, and elegant in figure, he rode his horse gracefully, and was first in every pastime. His long face, with the small eyes, is not yet swollen and reddened by indulgence and disease. It has, indeed, a gentle, benevolent, and royal expression; an air of kind knightliness: and this is the pose which Francis affected. He was to be the Amadis of kings. He was brave to folly, ideally rash in love and in war; he was fantastically honourable. A story in the *Heptameron* relates how, having disco-

vered in his court a stranger who had conspired to murder him, Francis gave a great hunt, and, leading the traitor aside to a lonely glade, he offered to cross swords with him in fair fight, and then sent him pardoned away. Such stories as these captivated the popular imagination; and the splendid court of Francis, his love of art, his taste in architecture, his considerable skill in poetry, all this completed the national enchantment; for France, notwithstanding her love of thrift, has ever demanded glory or magnificence from her rulers. Also the person of the King was widely known. His habit of traversing the country through and through, hunting, pleasuring, inspecting frontiers, made all men acquainted with their monarch. And the nation, delighted with his showy chivalry, found their Prince a picturesque object for devotion.

But woe to those who expected more solid qualities from Francis. Fickle and variable as he was versatile, he veered from point to point with every wind. At bottom a profoundly indifferent nature, he cared only for the convenience of the moment. He accepted devotion gracefully, but it did not occur to him to repay it. His confidence was the one reward he bestowed on those who gave their lives to him; and this went far with the women who adored him. It gave them an exquisite sense of participation in his interests. He kept his grateful sister all her life travelling from province to province *en commis-voyageur de royauté*. He left half the cares of his country to his mother. But woe to any who, in her hour of need, expected to receive a like aid or service from the King. The Queen of Navarre never got her kingdom from him. Madame de Chateaubriand, in

her dreadful prison guarded by her jealous and ferocious husband, was left to die without a word. A certain Louise de Crevecœur discovered too late the heartlessness of her lover. "Do you not know?" she writes, "that those in prison make use of poison; my children and I eat nothing without I find an antidote for our food. It is for my love of you that they hurt me thus; and you endure it. This is sharper to me than the pain that I suffer." How terrible a light this chance-found letter casts on the figure of the gay, handsome, brave young Amadis who was at this time the hero of Europe. "It is for my love of you that they hurt me thus; and you endure it!" From many an honest servant of Francis this cry must have gone up; for neither gratitude nor pity beat under that dinted breast-plate of his. Yet, after all these years, knowing the end, and despite our great contempt, we feel the glamour that surrounds the figure of this ardent young poet and soldier, this brilliant hero of the Renaissance. And how much more did not his radiance blind the women who adored him as their hero and their king!

"*Scrivere a Luisa di Savoia è come scrivere alla stessa Trinità.*" So wrote the witty, blasphemous Cardinal Bibbiena. And it was true. Francis repaid the love and service of his worshippers by his confidence. Louisa and Margaret were scarcely less powerful than himself. On all political questions he consulted these contrasted minds: the violent, autocratic Louisa, and Margaret the modest and humane. Unconsciously to themselves, these different natures paralysed each other; and the policy of Francis is a brilliant tissue of inconsistencies, uncertainties, and sudden disasters.

Francis, though so newly King of France, did not

forget that by inheritance he was, also, through his descent from Valentina Visconti, hereditary Duke of Milan. The Sforzas, the successful usurpers, claimed possession as nine points of the law, and Maximilian the Emperor demanded Milan by right of his overlordship. Each was equally resolved to possess in that city the key of Italy. But these words, *Milan, Italy,* meant more to Francis than a mere political position. To his intensely artistic temperament, a corner of Italy was more precious than the whole of France. Milan to him meant beauty, poetry; gardened villas in which to pass a soft abandoned leisure; women more fair than those of his kingdom; churches and palaces which he, the great builder, knew how to value; lax and subtle Lombard art. From the first days to the last of his life the thought of Milan haunted him like a passion, and to the shadow of unpossessed Italy he constantly sacrificed his substantial realm of France. His first hazard ended in success, and made the name of the little town of Marignano a word to conjure with in France. No sooner was his reign begun, than with Lautrec and with Bayard, with the chivalry of France, the young King resolved to conquer his longed-for inheritance. He sent Bayard in advance with La Palice. No sooner did they set foot in Piedmont than they took prisoner Prospero Colonna, the general of the Swiss in the pay of Maximilian Sforza. When this news reached Francis, who was at Lyons with his mother, his sister, and his wife, nothing could restrain him from marching into Italy. He sent his wife, who was near her confinement, with Louisa and Margaret, to the familiar palace of Amboise. He left Louisa—"Madame" as she was now styled—Regent of France, bade them

farewell, and soon was in the mountains. He arrived in Lombardy in time to follow up the successes of Bayard and La Palice. The Swiss, rumoured invincible, had gathered in large reinforcements to defend Milan. Near Marignano the French under Francis encountered them. "It was," says General Trivulzio, "a battle of giants. They fought all night."

"The 13th of September, which was Thursday, 1515," writes the proud mother in her journal, "my son vanquished and defeated the Swiss near Milan; the battle began at five hours after noon; it lasted all the night and the morrow until eleven o'clock in the morning; and this very day I left Amboise to go on foot to Nostre Dame des Fontaines, to commend to her that which I love more than myself. It is my son, glorious and triumphant Cæsar, subjugator of the Helvetians.

"Sunday, the 14th of October, of the year 1515, Maximilian, son of the late Louis Sforza, was besieged in the Castle of Milan by the French, and made a conditional surrender to my son.

"The 14th of December 1515 my son took the oath of peace with the King of England——."

Thus, a year after his accession, we find Francis a conqueror in Italy, at peace with the Great Powers, adored and glorified in France; so begins his reign.

There were in Europe at this time two other sovereigns, young and rich, though without the brilliant elegance of the French monarch. Europe lay, in fact, at the feet of these three youths, two of them caring for little else but war as a chivalrous game, and peace as magnificent leisure; while the third was equally uninspired by public spirit, being engrossed already with the dreams of a subtle and tremendous ambition.

In 1519 the old Emperor Maximilian died, and each of these three kings stood forward to contest the Empire.

The eldest of them was Henry of England, eighth of the name. He was twenty-eight years of age, handsome, tall, blond, and ruddy. "His features," says Lodovico Falier, "are not merely beautiful—they are angelic." Robust in figure, he did not yet show signs of the extravagant corpulence of his middle age. He was vigorous and active in all sports, vain, jealous, arrogant, but as yet the arrogance seemed only a bluff English sort of dignity. Handsome, rich, and valiant as he was, Henry had not much chance for the empire. His kingdom was not a large enough state. "No one was on the side of the King of England," says Fleurange.

The real rival of Francis was Charles of Austria, King of Spain. These two were rivals, not only for the empire, but for Burgundy, for Milan, for Navarre, and for the Netherlands. They were nearly equal in power, for, while the domain of Charles was the vaster, that of Francis was more homogeneous and more compact. In temperament as different as in interests, each was born to be the antagonist of the other.

Charles was the youngest of the three. Born in 1500, he was nineteen years old at the time of the death of his grandfather. In the previous year, on the decease of his mother's father, Ferdinand, he had succeeded to the crown of Spain, for, though his mother was recognised as Queen, she was unfit to govern. She was that poor mad Queen of Arragon, who mourned so tragically the brutal Austrian husband who ill-used her. Charles was brought up far from the fantastic neighbourhood of his mother. He and

his sister were given into the care of his father's sister, the politic Margaret of Austria, who educated them in the Netherlands, where she ruled as Maximilian's governor. But all her care and healthy influence could not prevent Charles from inheriting the sombre temperament of Juana. The man who, when Emperor of half the world, should turn monk and dwell in the Escurial, was as a boy without brilliance, without activity, without fire; a pale, taciturn, studious lad, he seemed no formidable rival. "*Un quidam certain petit roi*," said the French, and laughed in their sleeves. They did not notice his hungry eyes, his powerful chin; they did not see the subtlety and power of combination which this pious, quiet lad inherited from Ferdinand and Isabel—the rare outbursts of determined energy which showed him the grandson of the fiery Max. He was, in truth, a most formidable adversary.

So it appeared when, in 1517, the three Kings, as candidates for the Empire, sent from France, from Spain, from England, their delegates to Frankfort. "As many were for the King of France as for the Catholic King," says Fleurange, "but not one for the King of England. And the day came at last when the election must be made, when it was cried aloud in the great Church of Frankfort, 'Charles, Catholic King, elected Emperor!' And this being done gave great joy to those who wished well to the Catholic King, and great mourning to them who were for the King of France, and they were vexed and bewildered, for they had spent in vain the moneys they once had."

Francis had lost the chance on which he had surely reckoned. He never forgave his rival. On

the other hand, he looked for help and friendship to Henry of England. It was natural that the two defeated candidates should band themselves together against the winner. Francis was sincerely attracted to Henry. Friendship, no less than policy, counselled him to make this tall, vigorous, blond young Saxon his ally. But Henry, it would appear, had never much reliance on his brilliant neighbour. He had the inbred natural English mistrust of a French jackanapes, and, in this special case, it did as well as penetration. He was jealous of Francis's success in sport, in love, in war, and, while the French King thought he was winning Henry by his grace and his vivacity, he was really only fostering the blind antagonism of Henry, only feeding his jealousy, and his dislike to feel himself inferior. Moreover, though it was certainly advantageous for France—always more or less at war with the Empire—to make a firm alliance with England, England could choose between France and Austria; and England, with her laden ships sailing ever to and from the port of Antwerp—commercial, industrious England might naturally choose the power which ruled the Netherlands.

In the treaty of 1515 between France and England, there stood a clause providing that the two kings should meet each other in personal interview at some place on the confines of their dominions, somewhere between French Ardres and English Calais.

At last, in 1520, this friendly encounter was finally arranged. France and England half ruined their resources for each to shine once in the eyes of the other. During three weeks the jousting and revelling went on; for three weeks Francis tried all his graces on his rival, hoping to win his trust, and gaining instead

his deadly jealousy. The whole court of either country was present on the field, "All clinquant, all in gold, like heathen gods." The two sad neglected queens encountered there, and there Henry met in the French camp Margaret's beautiful English maid of honour, the black-eyed, slim Anne Boleyn. There met two rivals no less potent than their masters: Wolsey of Canterbury, with his retinue of colossals, and Charles de Montpensier, Constable Bourbon, bearing in his hand the sword of France. Henry of England looked on the Constable, noted the tragic face, wedged like a knife in the hilt between the black masses of his hair, and said to Francis: "Were he my servant, I would cut off his head!" Had Francis taken this advice, he had not paid too dear for the Field of the Cloth of Gold.

But no end, none, did reward that vast expense. Henry would give no promise of alliance, and when the splendid camps were struck, and the French court were journeying home to Paris, Francis was overtaken by the news that Henry had gone to meet the Emperor at Wael. Without flourish or display the secret Charles had gained his ends. In a plain soldier's tent he arranged his business with England. Almost directly after, war was declared between France and the Empire, on the vexed questions of Milan and Navarre. England remained neutral for the nonce; but it was reported that Henry would bring forward his claim to the crown of France when Charles invaded Burgundy. So, in wars and rumours of wars, ended the tourneys of the Field of Gold.

CHAPTER III.

(1520–1523.)

THE AFFAIR OF MEAUX.

The useless magnificence of the Field of the Cloth of Gold, had exhausted the treasury of France, while Charles, without wasting a sou, had obtained a practical interview with Henry. The Emperor was sure of, at least, the neutrality of England; he was rich and ready for war. Francis, on the other hand, had to borrow money from the Florentines, and had secured no aid from England. On the contrary, the whole of the north of France was seized by an intermittent panic; in many a bank of clouds men saw an English fleet coming to lay waste and ravage. And this open unprotected, impoverished northern country was left without armies, almost without garrisons. For all the scanty soldiery of France was drawn away to the south, to fight in Navarre and to defend imperilled Milan.

War surprised Francis without men or money. The promised Florentine loan was never paid; nothing remained but to tax the suffering country. Tax after

tax was levied; unbeneficed priests were rated as laymen. Benefices were bought and sold; still money enough was not collected. Then the King took down the great silver grating, costing six thousand seven hundred marks, which Louis XI. had placed at the tomb of St. Martin. Once this would have been loudly clamoured against as sacrilege, but now men were too miserable to clamour.

Or, if they murmured, if they said strange things and dreamed strange dreams; if starved, afraid, abandoned, they made for their refuge a faith, uncredited and unknown: their dim voices were not heard in the noisy clangour and splendour of sixteenth-century warfare.

For in the towns of Picardy and Normandy, the quiet artisans looked and noticed, then pondered many things in their hearts. The useless glory of the rich, the squalor of the poor, the corruption, simony, and vile immorality of the Church; death near; desertion present; the world bitter, vague, unreal. Over their looms the weavers bent and dreamed; the smiths and armourers hammered strange thoughts into their iron; the very clergy read new meanings in their missals. A great idea had stirred in the silent womb of the quiet, industrial, abandoned North of France; a thought continually born, dead, born again into the world: God is all, the rest is nothing.

"In the year 1520," says the Bourgeois of Paris, "there arose in the duchy of Saxony, in Germany, a heretic doctor of theology, named Martin Luther, who said many things against the power of the Pope . . . and wrote several books, which were printed and published through all the cities of Germany and throughout the kingdom of France . . . and in 1521

there was a great famine, so that in Paris no corn and no bread were to be found in all the town for any price; and throughout the land of Normandy a still greater famine and scarcity of corn and of bread, so that ten bushels of wheat sold for ten livres. . . . And it must be noted that the greater part of the town of Meaux was infected by the doctrines of Luther."

Meaux was a town of weavers, a great industrial centre. Close enough to Paris to share the intellectual activity, the fever of speculation, which signalised Paris from the time of Duns Scotus to the time of Vatable, Meaux was yet aloof, apart; removed from the envies and glories of the court, from the hurry and business of the capital. It was a town of priests and weavers. From the episcopal palace there, a mild elderly bishop swayed the quiet city. This man, Guillaume Briçonnet, a gentle, humane, dreamy scholar, ex-man-of-the-world, garrulous and mystical, had gathered about him the most thoughtful of the French clergy. Under him Meaux remained a serene oasis among the spreading cupidity and corruption of the Church. The pious, the wise, the speculative spirits of France were attracted to that placid neighbourhood; the great Lefebvre d'Étaples, Gérard Roussel, Michel d'Arande, settled there. Then, all at once this humane and idealistic clergy—this starved, fiery, mystical population of weavers and artisans, was seized with a sudden panic: Charles was besieging Mézières. Hunger, desertion, fearful ravage, hovered over all alike. The world was proved an impracticable, an intolerable place of trial. There was nothing to comfort men, saving to build a refuge unseen and secure, a land that no rude soldiery could trample

under foot, a haven where all were welcome. The same spirit breathed upon clergy and populace. With interests already divorced from the material world (celibate and scholarly, underfed and sedentary visionaries), they threw themselves, heart and soul, upon the hope of God. In a few months the mysticism of Meaux was an organic and progressive movement. From the bishop to the lowest journeyman weaver, in every class, men spoke the same strange dreamy words, foretold the same necessary purification, turned with the same energy to the new-discovered scriptures, quoted alike the wonderful commentaries of Lefebvre d'Étaples (1512–1522) which began the great Reformation in Europe.

Guillaume Briçonnet, Bishop of Meaux, a vague and holy nature, was not without the vanity of the mystic. A man of sincere sympathy, sincere emotions, his lack of precision in feeling and thinking condemned him to play an insincere part. He did not inquire of himself whether he really felt, to the same extent of daring and suffering, the intense faith that stirred the awakened clergy, the miserable populace of Meaux. He sympathised with them; he was their bishop. It seemed right to him to stand in the front of their movement, to be their man of God. So we find grouped below this gentle mediocre bishop, with his incomprehensible flow of mystical garrulity, men of ardent and incisive faith like Lefebvre d'Étaples, and Gérard Roussel, Guillaume Farel, Michel d'Arande, all the heroes of the French Reformation. For a long time Briçonnet de Meaux, who called these great men to shelter in his diocese, appeared a holier and wiser man than they.

It was to this Man of God that the Duchess Mar-

garet wrote when war and disaster suddenly confronted her with the problems of existence. She knew him, it would seem, only by repute; but in sore distress of soul she sought his aid, as suffering women of old sought the help of a greater Reformer. Margaret's soul had been born in the trouble and sorrow with which she learned that her brother's kingdom was menaced; her brother's life in danger; his safety and honour trusted (O haunting, unspeakable terror!) to the shallow mediocrity of her own husband. For Charles of Alençon was to lead the vanguard of the war. The brilliant, accomplished, joyous young princess was suddenly made into something more than this. "I must now meddle with many things which may well make me afraid," so she writes to Briçonnet, craving from the unknown the sympathy, the aid, she could not find in the familiar.

How should they guide her now, these Bourbons and Bonnivets, wholly given to the world; these poets and scholars, Marots and Budés, intent on Prosody and Grammar? No; her long studies in theology, her conversations with Madame de Chatillon, had taught her to look for other consolations. And she was sorely in need of help and friendship. This war, which heaped upon her so many fearful doubts and troubles, took from her at the same moment all her support—the brother she adored, the husband she had grown to regard with friendly acquiescence—and, taking her kinsmen and acquaintance, took also the sweet companion of her early womanhood, the tender and spiritual Philiberta of Savoy, her mother's young half-sister. So, looking on the future with miserable eyes, aghast, sick at heart, Margaret wrote to the far-famed Man of Meaux, and begged him to send

her, for comfort, his chaplain, the learned Michel d'Arande :—

"Monsieur de Meaux, "June 1521.

"Knowing there is but one thing needful, I have recourse to you, to beseech you, in God's name, to deign by prayer to make yourself the means that He may please to lead M. d'Alençon according to His holy will. For, by the King's command, M. d'Alençon departs as lieutenant-general of the army, which, I misdoubt me, will not return without war. And, since peace and victory are in His hand, and thinking that you wish well, not only to the public good of the kingdom, but also to my husband and to me, I employ you in my affairs, and demand of you spiritual service; for I must needs meddle with many things which well may make me afraid. And again, to-morrow my aunt of Nemours leaves us for Savoy. Wherefore I recommend her and myself to you, and pray you, if you think this a fit season, to let Master Michael depart on a journey hither; it would be a consolation, which I only desire for the glory of God, leaving it to your discretion and to his.

"La toute vostre,

"Marguerite."

Thus, in this naive, earnest appeal for aid, begins the strange correspondence of Briçonnet and Margaret—a correspondence eight hundred pages long; fantastic, mystical, bewildering, beyond belief. It is difficult to comprehend the consolation which Margaret found in this interchange of metaphors.

"I share my cake with you!" she cries, telling the good bishop of her trouble; and Briçonnet forthwith

responds: "Ah! madame, understand that there is in this world a cake of tribulations for you to share with your useless son, made from scattered tares, ground in the mill of sorrow, kneaded with cold water in the trough of infidel and disobedient presumption, baked in the furnace of self-love, of which the eating has been a fig poisoning the architects and their posterity, until the unleavened meal has been put in the cask of human nature." And, again, in answer to some appeal of hers he declares his own unworthiness in still more mystic and astounding fashion: "Who is deserted, is abysmed in the desert; seeking the desert and not finding it; and, finding it, is yet the more bewildered; and a poor guide is he to guide another out of the desert, and to lead another into the desert desired. The desert starves him with mortiferous hunger, although he be full to the eyes; goading his desire but to satisfy it and impoverish it with poverty." Margaret at length is herself in fault. This last message is too hard for her. She beseeches Briçonnet to speak more plainly in a letter which pathetically endeavours to copy his own extraordinary style. "Demetaphorise yourself," she entreats him. "The poor wanderer cannot understand the good which is in the desert, for lack of knowing that she is deserted. Prithee, for kindness' sake, run not so swiftly through the desert that she cannot follow you . . . in order that the abyss invoked by the abyss may whelm in its abysm the poor wanderer Margaret." But Briçonnet cannot refrain from pursuing so fructiferous a metaphor as that which the last sentence of the Duchess offers. He replies at once, without demetaphorising: "The abyss which prevents all abysses, which in saving from the abyss whelms in the abyss

without whelming or spoiling [*en le desabysmant l'abysmer en l'abysme sans l'abysmer*], which abyss is the bottomless bottom of things, the way of the wanderers, without road or path," &c.

In this gallimaufry of absurdities it is difficult to catch the allusion to the mystical love of God, which absorbs all thought, feeling, envy, and leaves the soul absolutely devoid of personal existence, the body quite without desire or sensation. This longed-for death-in-life is the bottomless bottom of things, and we comprehend that a thought so unthinkable could not well be conveyed in precise and reasoned language. We remember that such mystical speculation, couched in clear and logical terms (as in the writings of Master Eckhart) becomes merely Negation, or, at most, Agnosticism. And we are inclined to set aside Briçonnet as a worthy dreamer, not quite sure of that he dreams. But, on a more careful reading, we begin to wonder if this involved and intricate style be not merely a means to set the suspicious off the scent of heresy and treason. "Blow with your breath often upon the fire divine," writes Margaret to him, "set alight the wood that is still green." And he replies: "The true fire which since long has been lodged in your heart, in that of the King and Madame, by grace the greatest and most abundant that I can conceive, I know not if this fire has been covered and slackened, I will not say put out, for God in his goodness has not yet abandoned you. But ask you each in your heart if you have let the fire burn up according to the given grace. I fear you have procrastinated; I fear you have deferred. . . . But I will pray Him to light such a fire in your hearts, to wound them and pierce with such unbearable love, that from you three may issue

a flame, burning and setting alight the remainder of your realm."

So we perceive, behind this mask of metaphors, a great and tangible effort: the endeavour to convert the Royal Family of France to the new ideas, to the wish for Reform. Margaret, herself an eager proselyte, throws herself ardently into the scheme. Her frequent letters to Briçonnet are chiefly concerned with this supreme topic. During the siege of Mézières she brings her mother to Meaux, where they spent the winter; and on their departure Margaret does not relax her efforts. "Madame has begun to read in the Holy Scriptures. You know the confidence that she and the King place in you." And Lefebvre writes to rejoice with her in the progress of the good work. "The King and Madame," writes Margaret, "are quite decided to let it be made known that the truth of God is no heresy." Indeed, at that time, when Protestantism as a Church in revolt did not as yet exist, when Lutheranism was the most cultured fashion of the age, it appeared faintly possible that Francis, the Father of Letters, might be brought to favour the opinions professed by the most learned, the most intellectually brilliant scholars of Europe. But Margaret, in this matter, did not understand the temper of Francis and of her mother. Lax and frivolous in regard to the spiritual importance of Catholicism, they believed it, none the less, a necessity of good conduct; that vast hierarchy appeared to them as a temporal force, in which all government and authority was rooted. Louisa and Francis were not of the pious. "I have canonized Francis de Paule—at least I paid the tax!" cries Louisa, and she makes sport of a "Fricassee of Abbeys" which was served

up on the death of a certain prelate. Neither she nor her son were in awe of the Church, of their faith, of their Deity even. But they had an immense reverence for the temporal authority of Rome. "Any other religion would prejudice my estate," says Francis; and in this opinion, adds Brantôme, King Soliman perfectly agreed. This quoting of the Grand Turk, the Antichrist himself, as to the importance of the Catholic Church, proves exactly how much and for what reasons the Court of France respected it. Heresy as an opinion was perfectly in accord with the King's liberal taste; but heresy as an agent, as a factor, must be put down with fire and sword. Gradually Briçonnet apprehended this fact; and, being an excessively timid and hesitating nature, he bitterly regretted having gone too far. In sore distress of mind he wrote to Margaret—this Briçonnet who had so sternly admonished her for procrastination—"*Let it please you to slacken the fire for some time.* The wood you wish to burn is so green that it will put out the fire; and we counsel you (for several reasons, of which I hope to tell you the rest some day) to leave it alone; if you do not wish to quite extinguish both the brand as well as the surplus which desires to burn and to enflame others." But Margaret was too deeply in earnest to hesitate; she never had learned to be afraid. Her sanguine temperament had no doubt of success; and she seemed in a fair way to succeed. Madame had read St. Paul, from curiosity and for amusement; her daughter already made sure of her conversion. "My sister-in-law, my dear sister, is quite of our opinion," she writes to Briçonnet. This may have been Madame de Vendôme (the other grandmother of Henri IV.,) but I am inclined to

believe that Margaret found her first convert in the good, stolid, gentle Queen Claude. Such success was followed up, for Margaret did not heed her correspondent's timid expostulations. The misery of the time, the ever-increasing disasters, inclined all minds to religious enthusiasm. Milan was lost as easily as gained; Navarre, conquered in a fortnight, was taken from the King as quickly. Charles was laying siege to Mézières. Henry was expected at Calais; enemies were all round, and hunger in the midst.

Among such conditions the movement spread and grew. In her intrepid faith Margaret conceived the reformation of the entire duchies of Alençon and Berry. But she found difficulties in her path. The secrecy that must needs be kept, the lack of adequate helpers, the denseness of the people, all retarded the work which she considered *la salut des âmes*, the salvation of souls. She writes to Briçonnet, in September 1522, complaining that Michel d'Arande had had to leave too soon:—"Have pity on the country where he had promised to stay for some time, and which is so deprived of men of his kind that (to subsidise my duty left undone neither through absence or negligence) I had prayed him to succour the poor sheep there. . . . The surety of the porter and some little cowardice of soul prevent me from writing more." A worse trouble soon came, in the declared enmity of the Archbishop of Bourges. Margaret possessed absolute temporal control in the duchy of Berri, given her by Francis in 1517; she administered justice there even as in Alençon. But she was powerless against the Church. And now the Archbishop of Bourges threatened Michel d'Arande with imprison-

ment for life, interdicted him the pulpit, and fulminated excommunication against his hearers.

For the Church, at first amused, careless, curious, became alarmed and angry at the extent of this heresy. The Diet of Worms (1521) signalised the importance of Luther; and the orthodox French party, the clericals, the Sorbonne or Faculty of Theology, became aware that they, too, had a nest of Lutherans in their midst. There was talk of burning and of branding. A formal censure of the new ideas was pronounced by the Sorbonne: "One should employ rather flames than arguments against the arrogance of Luther," ran the text. And before the Church of Nôtre Dame de Paris the writings of Luther were burned to ashes, as a warning to his followers. The propositions of Luther were condemned one by one; and none more heartily than that which maintained that the burning of heretics was contrary to the teaching of the Gospel. Lefebvre d'Étaples was threatened with the stake. Then a descent was made upon the town of Meaux, well-known as the head-quarters of the new ideas. Farel, Mazurier, Lefebvre, and many others were obliged to flee for their lives. Others were made prisoners in the dungeons of the Sorbonne. And now a terrible choice was left for the gentle, cultured, timid Briçonnet. His turn would assuredly come next. He trembled, this prophet who had in him something of the mystic's insincerity, and all the sensitive versatility of the dilettante. In face of exile, captivity, torture, the stake, his presence of mind utterly failed him, and the man of God was found, after all, a weak, temporising, amiable ecclesiastic. For the sake of a theory he could not betray his order, sacrifice his liberty, his life. So, on the

15th October 1523 he issued a decree against those who, *abusing the gospels*, deny purgatory and the saints; on the 13th of December he preached against the "Lutheran pest." He joined himself with the Sorbonne against his former flock; launching out decrees of exile and condemnation like any Magister of Paris. No doubt he argued to himself that where he counselled flight, another would have lit the stake. But his apostasy caused him much hatred, as may be imagined. "This Bishop Briçonnet," says Antoine Froment, "fearing to lose his Bishopric and his life, turned his coat and became a persecutor of those whom formerly he had instructed. . . . . Soon after this miserable bishop, haunted by remorse, resigned his see and died of despair: a marvellous example of the horrible judgment of God against those who persecute the truth, having known it." This bitter tone, this acrimonious arrangement of simple facts (for Briçonnet died quietly enough, and maintained to the last his character of the enlightened man of culture), is common to all the Lutheran historians of the time. By the Catholics, also, he was regarded with suspicion and dislike. Already, some months before, Louisa of Savoy wrote in her diary: "By the grace of the Holy Ghost my son and I began to recognise the hypocrites white, black, grey, smoke-coloured, and of every hue, from which God in His infinite clemency has seen fit to preserve us." These hypocrites, we can have no doubt, were her pious neighbours of Meaux; Briçonnet, her correspondent; Lefebvre, who sent her the Epistles of St. Paul; Master Michael, her chaplain: all Lutherans at heart. Louisa never pardoned this attempt upon her faith; and Briçonnet, disdained by the reformers whom he had betrayed, was no less himself an inno-

vator, a suspect, a hypocrite in the eyes of the Catholic party. So strangely fallen was the Man of God.

"My son and I," writes Louisa. She makes no note of Margaret, whose mystical fervour was heightened by persecution. She was now more than ever identified with the party of reform; for their abrupt danger had touched the strongest fibre of her nature, her compassion for the oppressed. Heedless of her own peril, she toiled day and night to rescue and preserve these impoverished fugitives — to obtain a hiding-place for this, a pardon for that, a pension for the other. And she worked to such purpose, she used to such effect her influence with Francis, that from 1521, when the persecution began, until 1525, the year of the captivity, no victim was burned alive at the stakes of the orthodox. Still there were other miseries: flogging, branding, torture, miserable dungeons, from which she could not rescue all suspected. And the spectacle of so much pain and such injustice wounded her gentle heart; and did not rankle there. Strange tenderness for the oppressed, that showed no reverse of hatred for the oppressor; constancy in well-doing, that knew no disdain for the weaker and more fickle. This exquisite humanity, this perfume of charity, is the very breath of Margaret's soul. While rescuing Roussel and Lefebvre, sheltering the poor shepherdless flock of Meaux, she felt no bitterness towards their betrayer. She did not resent the failure of this timid pastor to whom she had entrusted her soul and so many others. He having flagged and fallen away, she quietly stepped into his vacant place and took upon her slender shoulders the burden he had dropped. From this moment Margaret, not Briçonnet, is the centre of the movement of Meaux.

No censure escaped her lips; she did not even interrupt her correspondence with the Bishop, and maintained it always on the same tone of reverence and appeal. Perhaps it was not all charity. At least, I think, a factor in that long-suffering charity of hers was a certain chivalrous denseness, a certain obstinacy in clinging to an ideal, which made her patiently accept the faulty Briçonnet as her spiritual superior, even as she accepted Francis as her perfect hero, despite the many foibles, the long debasement, the patent degradation, which would have disenchanted any other worshipper. The pedestal on which this idealising woman set her idols was so high that she did not see their feet of clay. And, bowed down before her shrines, she offered a life-long unparalleled devotion to those whose real qualities she never even saw.

CHAPTER IV.

(1521–1524.)

CONSTABLE BOURBON.

"*Il me fault mesler de beaucoup de chouses que me doibvent bien donner crainte*": thus Margaret wrote to Briçonnet in 1521. Already, indeed, she must have felt the dreadful approach of nearer troubles than wars with the Emperor or uneasy peace with England. In that year the King took from his school-fellow, Constable Bourbon, the right to lead the vanguard, and gave it to his brother-in-law d'Alençon, a man without genius or experience of warfare. In the next summer Louisa of Savoy began a lawsuit against this Constable Bourbon, her cousin, in which she laid claim to the Bourbon estates. Charles de Montpensier, a Bourbon Cadet, had married Suzanne, the hunch-backed daughter of Pierre Duke of Bourbon and Anne of Beaujeu. Naturally he took possession of the vast inheritance which came with his wife from her father and her mother. But the Crown declared that the estates of Anne of Beaujeu lapsed at her death to the King; that she had, in fact, a mere life-interest in them. And Louisa, a niece of Pierre, claimed his

inheritance on the death of Suzanne. Thus, in her cruel anger, she hoped to denude the Constable of the whole of the heritage of his dead wife. Such a hatred as hers, altering the whole course of Europe for many years, deserves to be explained. Louisa was a violent hater; nor was this the first shock that her private spite had given to the public weal of France. She had already hated the House of Foix: Madame de Chateaubriand, the King's almost royal mistress, and her brothers Lautrec and Lescun, the Viceroys at Milan. In order to secure the disgrace of Lautrec, Louisa had intercepted the money which the King had finally despatched to pay the Swiss troops in the Milanese. Louisa embezzled the money, and the mercenaries revolted. Lautrec was disgraced, and France lost Milan.

And now Madame directed her hate against a greater rival with larger interests at stake. The Constable Bourbon was, after the King, the most important personage of France. He possessed, through his marriage with Suzanne of Bourbon-Beaujeu, no less than seven French provinces. When his eldest child was born the King stood sponsor; and the guests were served at table by five hundred gentlemen in velvet. No prince in Europe displayed a more stately magnificence than he. He was, indeed, a striking and picturesque figure, this half-Italian soldier, only five years older than the King, but looking more resolved, maturer, with his tragic Southern aspect, set mouth, and great melancholy eyes. He was no less brave than Francis, and a far better leader; for, indeed, good soldiership was his natural inheritance from his Bourbon ancestors, who had all been generals, and his Gonzaga forebears, all Condottieri. He was the cousin

of those Mantuan Gonzagas who had but lately added Montferrat to their domains. This French Gonzaga was no less resolved to rise. Through a prudent marriage, he had become the richest man in France; and he was determined that his courage and address should make him the most powerful. Already, in 1513, Louis XII. had created him Constable of France as a reward for his prowess in battle. King Francis, on his succession, might, however, have annulled this dangerous favour. No wise sovereign would permit a prince, young, popular, of a great race, and immensely rich, to remain Constable of France. An office so powerful, if occupied at all, should only be filled, as a compliment to bygone valour, by some decrepit general too old to mutiny. For the Constable was virtually king of the army. The Sovereign himself, in time of war, could order nothing save through him. Knowing this, and seeing the Constable's proud and resolute mien, Henry of England had said, in 1520, "Were he my subject, he should no longer wear his head!"

But Bourbon meant to wear his head and, if possible, a crown upon it. He found a means to keep in favour with the King through the all-powerful influence of Louisa. Louisa was forty-five years old, but still very handsome; she was far more ardent and vehement than in her youth, violent and tender at once, credulous as to the effect of her own charms; in fact, a woman made to be deceived. She fell passionately in love with this dark young Bourbon whom she had brought up with her own children; and for some time he made great use of her affection. She was the King's mother and a very clever woman, still handsome, still courted; no doubt, in spite of the thirteen years difference between them, he would have married her if no heir

had been born to Francis; and during the first three years of his reign Queen Claude gave the King only daughters. But in 1518 the Dauphin was born; in 1519 Henry, the King's second son. And then Bourbon began to shift his plans. If he still courted Louisa, it was in the hope of winning Renée, Queen Claude's young sister, whom he wished to marry, and as a means to the favour of the Duchess Margaret, with whom he fell in love; and gradually Madame perceived that she had lost him. She remembered all that she had done for him; how her influence had kept him in power; all the pensions she had heaped upon him, 24,000 livres as Constable, 14,000 as Gentleman of the Chamber, 24,000 as Governor of Languedoc; this in addition to his vast estates. She remembered that she was old and he was young, that she loved him and he used her to his profit. And then, in her furious indignation, she strove to undo all that she had done, to shatter this grandeur she had herself built up. So in 1521 the King took the leading of the Vanguard from Bourbon, who was at least a soldier, and gave it to Alençon. And in 1522 Madame began her lawsuit for the Bourbon estates.

Bourbon was quite aware that the King's mother, rightly or wrongly, was certain to gain her suit. He was also aware that, shorn of his lands, his power would be gone. He was the greatest landowner in France; the extent of his estates had become a proverb.

> "L'Empereur est grand terrein,
> Plus grand que Monsieur de Bourbon,"

writes Clément Marot. He was, in fact, the standard of comparison. He was resolved not to lose his im-

portance. But only two courses now were open to him: either, relying on Louisa's past affection, to marry her, the rival heir, or, in case of a decision granted in her favour, to mutiny against the crown of France.

Charles of Bourbon, indignant, high-spirited, outraged, decided on the latter course. He was already regarded as the head of the popular party. The graver of the nobles were with him, Louis de Brézé, Seneschal of Normandy, St. Vallier, and many others. "All the great personages," says Charles V., "are for him." The Parliament, no less, saw in the Constable the advocate of its rights and privileges, persistently disregarded by the King. The lawyers were with him, and the Liberal bourgeois. He was supposed to be the great reformer, the man who had the wrongs of the country at heart. "This virtuous prince," writes Cardinal Wolsey, "seeing the ill-conduct of the King and the vast extent of abuses, wished to reform the kingdom and assuage the poor people." This, of course, is stating the case from the point of view of the enemies of France. Yet, if Bourbon had remained in his own provinces, there is no saying how his rebellion might have ended.

England and the Empire saw with delight this dissension between Francis and the greatest of his subjects. They each sent a secret envoy to the Constable; and it was privately agreed that, as soon as Francis should be gone to reconquer Milan, the English should invade Picardy, the Germans and Spaniards enter Guienne and Burgundy, while the Constable should seize the central provinces. The kingdom conquered, each should satisfy what he considered his just claims. Henry should take the North, and call himself

in earnest King of France; Charles regain his old dukedom of Burgundy; the Constable should govern Provence and Bourbonnais as a sovereign prince. So three claimants should be satisfied, and France exist no more.

To such a pass the enmity of Louisa and his own furious anger had driven the Constable. He had of late had much to suffer. The King had publicly insulted him at table; his generalship was taken from him; his estates were to be handed to another. But at present Bourbon endured in silence, waiting for an expedient to leave Paris almost in battle-array.

Let us hear how it struck a contemporary. "And my said Lord of Bourbon," writes the Bourgeois of Paris, "on Friday, the 27th of March of the said year 1522, left Paris, by the King's leave, to go through Brie and towards Provence; *and he took with him all the archers and all the crossbowmen of Paris,* in order to take five or six hundred evil livers and bandits which did much harm in the flat country there. And many of them were hung. *And thence he went into his own land of Bourbonnais.*

"In the said year 1523, Friday the 11th of September, news was brought to Paris by Réné, the Lyons' messenger, that Monsieur de Bourbon had left the land of France; and on Our Lady's day in September had departed in secret from his land of Bourbonnais; and by the sound of trumpet he was proclaimed a traitor throughout the land of France; and it was proclaimed that whoso should take the said Lord of Bourbon and deliver him into the hands of the said Grand Master, my Lord Alençon, or into the hands of M. de la Palisse, the King would grant him 10,000 golden

crowns; or for information where he could be taken, 20,000 ordinary crowns."

But soon it became known that no one would easily earn those 10,000 golden crowns; for M. de Bourbon was in the camp of the Emperor, preparing to invade Provence. The tide of opinion suddenly turned. Bourbon was no longer a popular hero; men saw in him, and justly, a traitor leagued against his country with her bitterest enemies. Nothing could have been better for Francis, whose carelessness and frivolity had begun to disgust the more serious of his subjects. He was again the Knight of France, the champion of the French, the Ogier of his time; the true Amadis defending his kingdom from a traitor; while Bourbon, mistrusted even by his allies, obtained but the third place in the Emperor's army. The Marseillais fought so well against the Constable that a panic seized the invading army, thrust back pell-mell into Italy, defeated without a blow. Meanwhile the nobles of Bourbon's party refused to rise. The rebellion came to nothing.

CHAPTER V.

(1524–1525).

SEQUELS.

Hélas, La Palice est mort,
Il est mort devant Pavie ;
Hélas, s'il n'estoit pas mort
Il seroit encore en vie.

Quand le roi partit de France
A la malheur il partit,
Il en partit le dimanche
Et le Lundi il fust pris.

Chanson de Pavie.

Francis was not satisfied that he had preserved his kingdom, and secured his crown. A second time he determined to reconquer Milan. Against Louisa's earnest prayers he crossed the Alps again, to fight for that Milanese which her bitterness had lost him; and across the Alps with him went many a gallant gentleman who never should return. Bayard and Bonnivet and La Palice should fall upon the field; Alençon return to die of a broken spirit; Montmorency and

young Navarre, with the King himself, should fall into a long captivity. But these were all impatient then to fight the Emperor, because the traitor Bourbon was sheltered in his army.

The presence of Bourbon in the Imperial camp was, indeed, the strongest motive that Francis had to continue the campaign. For the situation was in the highest degree difficult and desperate. Germany, Spain, and England were banded together against France; which, after a definite success against the Emperor's army under Bourbon and Pescara, might with all honour have proposed an advantageous peace. But Francis could not rest till the traitor was punished—till the traitor was punished and beautiful Milan reconquered.

So, in an evil moment, he led his armies south. Louisa, who strongly disapproved of this rash venture; Margaret, anxious and grave, with her husband and her brother both in Italy, remained at Lyons with the poor consumptive Queen. Claude was dying in great resignation at twenty-five years of age. Before the armies reached Milan, the King received the news that she was dead. He who had neglected her living, felt a genuine pang at her death. "I had not thought," he cried in naive remorse, "that the bonds of marriage were so hard and difficult to break. Could I buy her life with mine, she should live again." But Claude was beyond all care and kindness. She left her three little boys, François, Henri, and Charles, and her three little daughters, the pious, loving Charlotte, beautiful Magdelaine, and wise little Marguerite, in the custody of their father's sister. Henceforth, Margaret was to them as a mother; and the most touching and charming of her letters are those

written to the absent King about his motherless children.

Margaret had many troubles with this family of nephews and nieces; and, in her busy home at Lyons, eagerly she watched the distant campaign, where her husband was, and her brother, and Montmorency her life-long friend; yet the gout of Madame and the measles of the children seemed the most eventful things. Madame had injured her health with nursing the Queen. "I fear her health grows weaker and weaker," writes Margaret. And, indeed, reflecting on the dangers and disasters which her passions had brought upon the kingdom, Louisa may well have grieved and grown weak. "The extremity of sorrow which she shows for the death of the Queen is quite incredible." Yet Louisa had never been a tender mother to poor ailing Claude.

But Margaret, with her sweet dense kindness, was not the woman to discover if anything worse than mourning ailed her mother. Like all idealists, she was not very quick of insight. To her, the death of Claude was an excuse sufficient for all. And, without inquiring too deeply, she strove to heal her mother's wound by a tender care which sheltered her as far as possible from trouble and apprehension.

Just then the children took the measles. Margaret would not tell her mother, so ill and weary already; nor her brother, who needed all his heart for battle. It is only to Bishop Briçonnet (no less than heretofore a guide, philosopher and friend) that she opens her troubled heart. "It has pleased our Lord to give Madame Charlotte so grievous a malady of fever and flux after her measles, that I know not if now He will take her to Himself." This is on the 15th of Sep-

tember. But poor little Charlotte was not so easily released; for thirty days she was very ill. Margaret scarcely left her side. She dearly loved this tender spiritual little soul, to whom in after days she dedicated a poem of which we shall hear more than once again: *Le Myrouer de l'âme pescheresse*. While she stooped over the bed, tending the sick child in anxious loneliness of fear, the great affairs of the world went on outside. Milan was recaptured, siege laid to Pavia; but these battles and sieges seemed all dim and lifeless, like a figured tapestry shaken in the wind; while, alive, suffering and real, little Madame Charlotte lay upon her knees, and Margaret spoke with her of Jesus and of Paradise. At last an end came, the poor little girl succumbed to exhaustion: "delivered from a little body that could not live on earth till eight years old," and Margaret writes to Briçonnet in a strain of strange religious exultation, like to that she displayed again in later years upon the death of her only son:—

"Where the Strongest has come, he hath vanquished the armed flame, and hath commanded the sea to stop its waves, and hath left content and joyous, nor able to praise him enough, my heart and my spirit. Even (to say the truth) he hath cured and fortified my body, vainly labouring with little repose, for the space of a month, while the little lady was ill. But after her death, I suffered for the King, from whom I had concealed his daughter's illness; who yet divined her death, having dreamed three times that she said to him: 'Farewell, my King, I go to Paradise!' [*Adieu, mon Roy, je voys en Paradis!*] and this caused him an extreme sorrow, which (by the goodness of God) he endured patiently. And Madame,

who had not heard of it, learned it all, through a captain of Adventure, and bore it in such a manner that from dinner-time till supper (one tear not waiting for the other, without uttering sighs of impatience or vexation) she did not cease to preach and undertake towards me the office of comforter which I owed to her."

Soon Margaret had to comfort her mother for a far heavier sorrow. The easy success of Milan was not followed up before Pavia. Yet, the 3rd of February 1525, Francis despatched to his mother a letter three quarto pages long, with a plan of Pavia enclosed, showing her how certain the French army was of taking the town by assault. Ten days later the battle took place; the French army was routed with disaster, all the great soldiers of France killed or captive, the King himself a prisoner. So ran the dreadful news. Worse still for the weeping mother and daughter at Lyons, it was soon known that the cowardice and incapacity of the Duke of Alençon was the cause of the worst disaster. He, the leader of the vanguard, had failed to come to the rescue of the King, abandoned by his Swiss. Not even Bourbon, the triumphant traitor, was more execrable that day in France than he.

On the evening after the battle, Francis in his captive's tent, drew off his ring and sent it to Soliman. By a less secret messenger he sent a letter to his mother: "Of all things I have none left but honour, and life, which is safe." Yet he beseeches them not to give way to too extreme a sorrow: "For still I hope that in the end God will not forsake me." And so, like true comforters, Margaret and her mother hide their desperate grief from him; writing cheer-

fully about little things; beseeching him not to fast, it is bad for the health; thanking God that his honour and life are safe; and hiding from him the dreadful task they have, poor women, to keep order in the panic-stricken realm when the full extent of defeat is known. Bayard was killed in the autumn, and now Bonnivet is slain. Lescun de Foix, La Palice, the great marshal—they are all dead, with many others who were as a tower of strength. And Montmorency, the wise and cold, he and the young King of Navarre, and Brion, the brilliant Admiral Chabot, are prisoners with the King of France.

But Alençon, the disgraced, the hated, the shameful, he is neither dead nor in prison. Sick at heart, leading the miserable remainder of his troops, he makes his way to Lyons where his wife awaits him. As he marched along he must have heard the bitter words, and angry songs of the resentful populace. The length and breadth of the land was sore against *les fuyards de Pavie*. "I hate more than poison," cries Rabelais, "a man who flies when sword-play comes into fashion. Why am I not King of France for eighty or a hundred years? My God! I would crop the tails of the curs who fled from Pavia." And in every village the labourers sang the first *Chanson de Pavie* with its melancholy close:—

> Mais par gens deshonnestes
> Fust laissé lachement.

Another ballad was sung to the air *Que dites-vous ensemble*. Through the streets, and along the lanes where the voices of the ploughers echoed gravely, the miserable Duke must have heard the same monotonous chant:—

Qui vit jamais au monde
Ung roy si courageux
De se mettre en battaille ;
Et délaissé de ceulx,
En qui toute fiance
Et qui tenoit asseur,
L'ont laissé en souffrance !
Veez là le malheur !

By the time the troops reached Lyons, the unhappy man was ill with despair and remorse. It was now April, two months after the disaster. But France had not yet begun to forgive him. Even his wife, the gentle Margaret, would not see him. The man she had never really loved was odious to her since he had ruined the brother she adored. But when she learned how seriously the poor defeated general took his failure to heart, how he was actually dying of his disgrace and her resentment, then pity and duty came to her aid. She wrote to Francis :—

"As for your poor sister, she writes this letter to you sitting at the foot of M. d'Alençon's bed ; he has prayed me to present you, with my own, his very humble recommendation, and to say that had he seen you ere he died he would go more happily towards Paradise. I do not know what to say to you, my Lord. All is in the hand of God. Only, I beseech you not to sorrow, either for him or for me ; and be sure that whatever comes, I hope that God will give me strength to keep my trouble from Madame."

On the 11th April, the mediocre, luckless, unhappy Alençon breathed his last. Margaret, drawn close to him by these last days of shame, and pity, and sorrow, sorrowed for the death she scarcely could regret. "Those first two days," she writes, "made me forget all reason, but since then, my Lord, my mother has

never seen me with a tear in the eye, or a mournful face, for I should hold myself too much more than miserable if I, who can do you service in nothing, were the cause of hindrance to her courage, who does so much for you and for all yours. But whatever I can do to give her recreation, believe, my Lord, I do it; for I desire so much to see you both happy together, that, hoping in God to have this blessing, I neither will nor can think of any other thing."

CHAPTER VI.

THE CAPTIVITY.

Left a captive in the tents of Charles, Francis looked towards every State in Europe and saw no hope of succour. England was against him; Spain, Austria, Italy, Germany, were his enemies. Drawing his ring from his finger, Francis sent it as a sign to Soliman the Magnificent, Sultan of Turkey.

The first messenger was murdered on his way; but the ring was finally obtained by Ibrahim, the brilliant Vizier of the Sultan, who wore it in triumph. A second ambassador, a certain Frangipani, was immediately despatched; he bore a letter and messages from Francis to Soliman, and returned secretly with the Sultan's answer. Thus a secret understanding began between France and the East, by the terms of which trade was to be encouraged between the two countries. Soliman promised that the Christian creed should be respected as his own. A French Consul was appointed at Alexandria. Whilst, more than all this, it was agreed that Soliman should attempt to win the Hungarian frontier of the Empire; thus harassing Charles in the East and giving room for the development of France in the West.

But before any result could come of this alliance Francis must be free. Soliman, in his letter, bids him not despair. It is not strange that great kings should be captive. And he adds, "My horse is always saddled, and my sword by day and night is girdled on." But it is difficult to see how Soliman could rescue the royal captive, unless by invading Hungary he could call Charles and his armies from Madrid, and leave Spain open to a French invasion.

Such plans were vague and audacious; and the present misery very real. The King was taken from Lombardy and sent to Madrid. Meanwhile panic reigned in his kingdom. Notwithstanding the poverty and division of the Emperor's camp, it still seemed possible to abandoned France that Bourbon the traitor might enter in and ravage her. Religious discord increased. The party of Luther and the Clerical party each attributed the sorrows of France to the corruption or the impiety of the other. In this year the first burnings began; and, under the influence of Cardinal Duprat, Louisa the Regent showed herself implacable towards the Reformation. The Parliament wrote to her, representing "the inconveniences which may arise from the heresies which pullulate throughout this realm": and trials were instituted against Lefebvre, Caroli, and Roussel. These were with difficulty rescued by Margaret, who procured an autograph remission of their process from her brother. Francis commanded Parliament to entreat the accused as "personages of great knowledge and men of letters and doctrine." But the danger was still so great that Roussel and Lefebvre fled to Strasburg, and henceforth corresponded under feigned names, only known to the initiated. Danger, however, only

increased the fervour of the Reformers; and from their exile they influenced the current of thought in France. The misery of earth helped to quicken the impulse towards Heaven.

"The further they take you from us," writes Margaret to her brother in May, on the eve of his journey to Spain, "the more increases in me the firm hope that I have of your deliverance and speedy return. For at the time when human wisdom fails and is troubled, then the master-work of our Lord is wrought; for it is He who alone will have the glory and the honour."

So, in these early days of the captivity, France awaited a miracle in favour of her King. His captivity had revived all the enthusiastic devotion of his people. Amadis for chivalry, Absalom for beauty, Ogier for courage, so the popular ballads of the moment portray him. The fight he made on foot alone against his captors of Pavia inspired a host of songs:—

Son cheval fust tué
  Là on vist Olivier,
Roland, aussy Richard
  Demenant leur mestier
Combattant tout à pied
  Comme Hector Troyannois
Oncques tel n'en sortit
  Du beau nom de Valoys.

Through the whole civilised world, his captivity shed a brighter lustre on the chivalry of Francis. England classed him with Richard, her troubadour *par excellence*; France with Charlemagne and with John the Good, her paragons of honour; and Soliman himself, writing to the King in prison, reminds him that Bajazet, the hero of Turkey, suffered a like misfortune. But it was above all in Spain, in the land of his captivity, that the cult of Francis reached its most fantastic

heights. The Spaniards, instinct with romance, chivalry, respect for heroic misfortune, saw their ideal in this flimsy and volatile Francis. Thrown by the Austrian Charles (always a foreigner to all his subjects) into a dark, unsightly prison, the French King inspired a reverent pity in the generous heart of Spain. From the lowest to the highest, the nation was interested in the illustrious captive. The family of the Duke of Infantado received a caution from the Emperor, offended by their enthusiasm. "Persons of great standing," writes Margaret, later, "desire nothing more than the return of the Emperor to Italy; and then you would not long be left in prison!" Ximena del Infantado fell so passionately in love with the royal captive, that, on his betrothal to another in 1526, she entered the religious life. And, indeed, Francis had never conquered so many hearts by his magnificence as yielded now to his misfortunes.

Charles found himself in the position of a gaoler, keeping his captive against the popular desire. The fret and annoyance of such a position hardened his heart. He behaved ungenerously to the prisoner who was none the less his equal, his rival, his companion-in-arms. With no dislike to Francis (for whom, indeed, he ever had a contemptuous affection), he made his prison as dreary, as uncomfortable as possible, thinking thus speedily to exact from him the surrender of Burgundy. But Francis, for all his volatile spirit, had a certain fineness of disposition, a certain real chivalry under his Amadis airs and graces. He refused to grant the Emperor's terms, though, as the year drew on, the Alcazar became, in the sultry summer weather, an intolerable exchange for Fontainebleau. Still Francis refused to dismember his kingdom; growing a little

weaker every month in his unaccustomed restraint, and attaining much facility in making verses, the one amusement of his dreary prison.

Naturally this heroic obstinacy increased yet further his popularity in Spain. The Emperor's sister, the young widow of the King of Portugal, shared the universal passion. Leonor of Austria was at this time about six-and-twenty years of age; not regularly beautiful. Yet her face, preserved to us by a painter of Clouet's school, far exceeds in interest and charm the more regular beauties of her day. A thin face, delicately sharp in outline, a hatchet-face it might be called unkindly, is set in bushy masses of crisp hair, whose reddish gold is wonderfully clear and beautiful in tint. The face, too, is fresh and fair in colour. A charming half-boyish face, with its shock of blonde hair and eager chevaleresque expression; an ardent face, with the Austrian lip modified to the self-willed, resolute pout of a spoiled girl, not brooking hindrance to her generous impulses. Yet this ardent blonde, with her look of chivalrous *naïveté*, her brilliant hair, and clear rosy colour, her full lips, and alert romantic air, has the dreamy, impassive, light-brown eyes, the thin finely-arched jet-black brows of a quite different type. There is something odd, unmatched, inharmonious, yet not unpleasing, in this brilliant face with the dull and dreamy gaze—something which tells us that this grandchild of the fiery Maximilian was the daughter of the mad Juana.

She had already played her romance, this quick-blooded Austrian-Spaniard, who represented all those qualities of their mixed race which her brother Charles ignored. In her girlhood, in her Flemish home, under the wing of her aunt, the politic Margaret, she had

met a handsome, stalwart German, the fair-haired Palatine Frederic. The two young people had fallen violently in love with each other, and kept their passion a secret for some months. But, finally, some well-informed Prime Minister got a hint of it; and the wayward Leonor was married against her will to a dissolute old dotard, the King of Portugal. On his death, the Palatine Frederic renewed his offers. But Leonor had already heard of her brother's captive, the Ogier, the Amadis, the Roland of France. She turned a deaf ear to her faithful Palatine.

Leonor had been promised by her brother to the Constable Bourbon. She refused to wed the traitor who had ruined her hero. Her frank, expansive nature did not seek to hide her interest. She writes to Louisa, "Would that it were in my power to deliver the King!" And, seeing Leonor so devoted, a new condition of peace began to be mooted in the court of Louisa at Lyons.

A letter exists, of which the signature is quite illegible, dated the 2nd of June 1525, and addressed to Louisa. Here the new plan is formulated for, I think, the first time. It is proposed that Leonor shall be given in marriage, not to Bourbon, but to Francis; that her daughter by her first husband be married to the young Dauphin; that the Duchess Margaret wed the Emperor; and Constable Bourbon the Princess Renée. On this plan the Duchy of Burgundy might be reserved for the eldest son of Leonor and Francis. This would, however, dismember the Dauphin's inheritance. On the 6th of June, Madame, who was Regent in France, sent an embassy to Madrid, to treat of the marriage of Leonor with Francis and of the Dauphin with her daughter. But all the other conditions of

peace waited the arrival of Madame d'Alençon. For it was now determined that the Duchess Margaret should visit her brother at Madrid, and solicit the Emperor on his behalf. "The arrival of Madame Marguerite," writes Brion in July from Venezuello, "will decide the deliverance of the King."

After some delay the Emperor sent a safe conduct to Margaret, and she prepared for her adventurous journey. Many mistrusted the integrity of Charles, and feared that he might invent some pretext to detain her as a hostage. "*Dieu vuelle que la fin seé como lo principé*" (God grant that the end be no worse than the beginning), wrote at this moment a citizen of Marseilles. And many feared other perils less august: the highway robbers who then infested the less-travelled portions of France and Spain. The season, too, was signally unhealthy; hot, with violent storms and thunder. But Margaret disregarded all these things; she was to see her brother again and to do him a service.

Much was, indeed, hoped for this journey, much expected from the influence of Margaret upon the Emperor. At another moment she might have shrunk from petitioning the man who had not yet answered the proposals which gave her to him in marriage. But during this long tedious journey she was subject to an access of exaltation, such as in times of great danger and difficulty she had experienced before. She seemed impervious to any thought but one, that she was nearing her captive brother; and as needles do not hurt the tender flesh of tranced women, nor tortures reach the sense of martyrs in their hour of crowning, so neither bodily discomfort nor wounded pride touched the feeling of Margaret at this moment.

On her road towards Madrid, a fortnight's journey

then from the frontier, she sent frequent letters to her brother. "I implore you," she cries, "to believe that whatsoever I can do in your service, were it to scatter to the winds the ashes of my bones, nothing would be to me either strange, or difficult, or painful, but consolation, repose, and honour. And at this hour, my Lord, I well know what strength of love our Lord has put in us three; for that which seemed to me impossible, thinking only of myself, is easy in the memory of you; and this makes me desire, for your good, things which the pains of death should not have made me wish for my own repose."

On her slow and painful way Margaret was met by dreadful news: the King was very ill. The hot summer weather and close confinement had brought him to death's door. The news spread like wildfire, causing a thrill of horror in France. The Dauphin was but seven years old; and a long regency seemed to threaten the exhausted nation. "News came," says the Bourgeois of Paris, "that the King was dead, captive, in a town called Madril; whence great trouble and sorrow arose among the people of Paris and throughout the land of France; and this lasted nigh a month."

Meanwhile Margaret hastened her journey towards her dying brother. In her litter, as she went, she wrote songs about him:—

Le desir du bien que j'actendz
Me donne de travail matière;
Une heure me dure cent ans,
Et me semble que ma lictière
Ne bouge, ou retourne en arrière;
Tant j'ay de m'avancer desir.
O qu'ell' est longue, la carrière
Où à la fin gist mon plaisir!

Je regarde de tous costés
  Pour veoir s'il arrive personne;
Pryant sans cesser, n'en doubtez,
  Dieu, que santé à mon Roy donne.
Quant nul ne voy, l'oiel j'abandonne
  À pleurer; puis sur le pappier
Ung peu de ma douleur j'ordonne:
  Voilà mon douleureux mestier!

O qu'il sera le bienvenu,
  Celluy qui, frappant à ma porte
Dira: Le Roy est revenu
  En sa santé très bonne et forte!
Alors la seur, plus mal que morte,
  Courra baiser le messaiger
Qui telles nouvelles apporte
  Que son frère est hors de dangier!

But no messenger came to win Margaret's embraces by such welcome news. The King sank lower and lower. An abscess had formed on the crown of his head; the body, already wasted by fever, could scarcely support this additional cause of weakness. On Monday, the 18th of September, Francis was so ill that his attendants sent for the Emperor, who all this time had never visited his ailing captive. Charles was really shocked when he heard that his rival lay a-dying. He travelled all the next day from Segovia to Madrid. It was dark when he reached the Alcazar where Francis was confined. Charles dismounted, leaving his *cortège* outside, lest their presence should fatigue his prisoner. The Viceroy of Naples and Anne de Montmorency met him at the gate, lighting the way with torches. So they reached the unprincely room where the most magnificent prince in Europe lay dying on his prison-bed.

Seeing the Emperor enter, Francis tried to raise himself on his elbow; but Charles, who, after all, was

still a young man with a natural heart, threw himself on his knees beside the bed and flung himself into the arms of Francis. So for a long time captive and captor held each other tightly embraced.

Then said Francis, who witnessed this affection with some excusable irony, "Sire, you see before you your prisoner and your slave!"

"Nay," cried Charles, with real remorse, "my good brother and true friend whom I hold as free!"

This was too much for Francis. He looked round the room.

"Your slave!" he repeated.

"My friend, who *shall* be free!" repeated the Emperor.

So the little scene has been handed down to us. We can imagine to what hopes and desires gave rise these words of Charles, dictated half by generous remorse, half by a desire to keep alive a valuable prisoner. On the morrow Margaret arrived. It was the 20th September. The Emperor was still at the Alcazar. When the bustle of her attendants announced her arrival he went down-stairs to receive this woman who had been proposed to him as a wife. He found her in the doorway, pale and in tears. She was dressed from head to foot in white, the mourning of a royal widow. He led her, still weeping, to her brother. When he shut the door on their meeting, he must have remembered that proposal of marriage, and recalled the pale, dishevelled woman he had left. She had had no time to repair the disorders of travel; she was worn with her long, hot journey over rough, unshaded roads. Her beautiful hair and graceful figure were seen at a disadvantage. Her long face with the marked features must have appeared haggard

in its grief. At least so much is clear; Charles, who at twenty-five years old, was the most important personage of his age, did not fall in love with this pale and tearful widow of three-and-thirty, whom he now encountered for the first time. We hear no more of a marriage between him and Margaret.

Meanwhile the joy was great between the brother and the sister. For the moment Francis appeared out of danger. But three days after, on the 25th September, the sinking of death appeared to overpower him. Montmorency sent a hurried message to the Emperor, who received with chill resignation the news that his scheming was outplanned by Death. "God has given him to me," he exclaimed, "and God has taken him away!" Yet he knew that if Francis died the battle of Pavia had been bought too dearly.

Meanwhile Margaret, in agony and exaltation, knelt praying by her brother's side. Francis lay quite insensible upon his bed. But none the less his sister had an altar dressed in his cell, and sent for the Archbishop and his priests to say a mass. At the moment of the elevation of the Host, the Archbishop turned and spoke to the dying King. Francis opened his eyes and asked for the Holy Sacrament. That evening the abscess broke, and immediate danger was over.

The King was still very weak; still feverish and needing better air and greater comforts than his prison could supply. Margaret at once began negotiations for a peace. But now she found the Emperor did not remember the words that had so often been quoted to her. He seemed in no haste to set his good brother free.

Margaret was in great distress. Even for her

brother's sake she could not counsel the surrender of Burgundy. And yet, unless she could satisfy Charles, there seemed nothing but perpetual imprisonment for Francis. No other king would come forward as a champion. Soliman as yet had made no sign, nor would he be likely to leave Turkey in the winter; and before another summer came her brother might be dead. Louisa, at home, had concluded a peace with Henry of England; but that wary king would only risk his moral support. And, to complicate her troubles, Montmorency had become jealous of her influence with her sick brother. She has to warn Francis not to listen to such tales of her as this old and long-loved friend may tell him. "I pray you, my lord," she writes, "keep me in your good graces, in spite of Montmorency, who is jealous."

Meanwhile the outer world kept assuring her that she was certain to conclude an advantageous peace. "*A vous, Madame, l'honneur et la mérite*," write the ministers from France in premature congratulation. "*Ne fais doubte que Madame d'Alençon, vostre seur, conclura tost une bonne paix*," writes Charles himself to the king, in the letter where he excuses himself from paying further visits to his captive. But Margaret must have suffered many a bitter doubt. She writes to her brother on the road to Toledo, from a village whither she has gone to conduct her business with the Emperor; and her letter (before the 13th) is full of trouble and of wounded pride:—

"October 1525.

"My Lord,

"You will have heard from Monsieur d'Ambrun and Babou of the terms they persist in here; which

are not like the letters and the kind words which Véré brought you from his master, as you shall know at greater length from their lips. Since their departure the Viceroy has sent me word that, in his opinion, it were better for me to go to meet the Emperor. But I have forwarded him a message by Monsieur de Senlys that I have never yet stirred from my lodging without being sent for; and that when the Emperor chooses to send for me I am to be found in a certain convent, where at present I have stayed from one o'clock till five, vainly waiting an answer.

"This is already the third day I have scarcely set my foot outside of convents; and this I have told the Viceroy I shall continue to do, so that the world at large may know that, if I do not speak with the Emperor, still my rank requires me not to court his courtiers and tamper with the servants of a master who promised you that I should speak to him alone of your affairs. I shall see, this evening, what they will do; and to-morrow, having received your commands, I shall follow them as best I can. And I assure you, my lord, that here they are so perplexed and hindered that they greatly fear I shall ask the Emperor's leave to retire; or so I gather from what has been said to the seneschal and to Senliz; and I fancy that by keeping our heads high a little longer we may force them to speak another language. And, come what may, we will deliver you by the grace of God. But I beseech you, since they set so infamously to work, do not trouble yourself about the slow progress we make in bringing them to the point, where so greatly desires to arrive

"YOUR MARGUERITE."*

* Champollion-Figeac.

Finally, on the 13th October, Margaret was received at Toledo by the Emperor in person, "with great politeness," says Ferreras, the Spaniard; but Margaret does not seem so satisfied. "*Je le trouvay bien froit*," she writes to her brother—"I found him very cold, but not inclined to stand on ceremony; for he put me off on pretext of speaking to his council, and said he would give me an answer to-day. And then he took me to see Queen Alyenor, his sister; where I stayed until quite late. And last night I went to see her, and she spoke to me in terms of great friendliness. It is true she goes on her journey* to-morrow, and I must go and take leave of her. I think she goes more by obedience than by choice, for they keep her very much in order. And as I was talking to her the Viceroy came in quest of me, and I went to the Emperor's apartments, who sent for me to come to his chamber; and he told me he desired your deliverance in perfect amity; but, in the end, he stopped at the question of Burgundy."

Margaret, by this time, centred her hopes on the intercession of Leonor. The Emperor's fine speeches, though abundant, covered an iron will, and she learned to put little trust in them. "He assures me always," she writes, "that he will do a thing that I shall marvel at." "But," she adds, elsewhere, "I think they all wish to content me without doing anything in reason." And again, "Everyone tells me he loves the King, but I have little experience of it." The only way to get at a peace was through Leonor, who might bring Burgundy as a dower.

"I desire, for your good, things which the pains of

* To Talavera, out of the way of Madame d'Alenzon's influence.—State Papers, Cardinal de Granvelle.

death should not make me wish for my own repose." So Margaret had written to her brother on her journey to Madrid; and now she found herself obliged perforce to agree to cruel terms. "I assure you, my lord," she writes to Francis, "that the office of solicitor in so unreasonable a company is a far more difficult service than it was to be your physician when you were sick."

Not until the end of the month was any result obtained from the frequent conferences between Margaret and the Emperor; then the following conditions were drawn up and sent to the King, "things which the bitterness of death should not make me wish for my own repose."

The King of France was to resign Burgundy, Auxonne, Macon, Auxerre, La Brie, Bar-sur-Seine, to the banks of the Somme. To this extravagant demand Margaret would not agree.

He was to resign Tournay, Flanders, and Artois; he was to resign all right to Milan and Naples; he was to resign all pretensions to Aragon. Agreed.

He was to abandon Henry d'Albret, King of Navarre, Robert de la Marche, and others, to the Emperor's justice. Not agreed to by Margaret.

He was to marry Leonor, Queen of Portugal, and settle Burgundy on their joint heirs. Refused by Charles.

M. de Bourbon, his allies and friends, to be reinstated in their former positions. Agreed.

Such miserable terms were the best to be obtained. With a sore heart must Margaret have watched the couriers set out from Toledo, carrying the news to her brother in prison. If he refused this peace, perpetual imprisonment lay before the gayest and most

splendid monarch of Europe. If, enfeebled by long captivity, he assented to these conditions, France must, perforce, descend to the level of a petty state.

But when in a few days the couriers returned, her heart must have beat high with glad recognition of her brother's chivalry. His letter ran :—

"MONSIEUR, MON FRÈRE,*

"I know you cannot condemn me to perpetual imprisonment more honestly than by asking, for my ransom, an impossible thing. On my side I am resolved to take my prison in good part, being sure that God (who knows I merit it not for long, being the captive of honourable warfare), God will give me strength to bear it patiently. And I have no regret, save only the fact that the honest proposals, which you chose to hold to me in my illness, should be barren of effect."

Thus affairs were still in the same state as on the morrow of Pavia.

Margaret was now in despair. Ferreras, the Spanish historian, assures us that she undertook to get Francis out of prison in disguise ; that she put in his bed a negro who was accustomed to carry the wood to the King's fire, and dressing her brother in the slave's attire, and having blacked his face, attempted to escape with him in the dusk, but was discovered by a groom of the chambers. This may be true, or it may be a mere blundering remembrance of the escape of Henry d'Albret from Pavia. But in either case, it was evident there was no rescue for the King of France.

In November another scheme began to occupy Margaret and her brother; a scheme by which the

* Champollion-Figeac.

Emperor would have left in his hands no king whom a hard captivity might incline to shameful terms, but a simple nobleman whom he could have no interest to misuse. In his prison at Madrid, Francis spent long hours in drawing up the act of abdication, by which he renounced the crown of France in favour of his eldest son. In these letters patent, Francis narrates his misfortunes of Pavia, his illness in prison, and the rigour of Charles; he speaks of the journey of Margaret, and how all her reasonable offorts were refused; then he adds that he would rather that he should remain all his lifetime in prison than sever his kingdom of France in pieces. He and his children will pay the price, "They are born for the good of my kingdom; true children of the public weal"; and France, he reminds his subjects, has been governed well by younger kings with the help of good counsel. He therefore appoints the Dauphin Francis, King of France, under the regency of Madame. In the event of the death of Madame, her place shall be filled by "*nostre très chère et très amée seur unicque Marguerite de France.*" But, in case of the deliverance of the King, this act and all its contents to be held null and void.

History with one voice has attributed the inspiration of this act to Margaret. This one counsel, the cheering cordial of her presence, and the furtherance of a friendship between her brother and Leonor, was all she had accomplished in the visit from which she had hoped so much. And now that visit was at an end. She had incautiously let the three months covered by her safe conduct slip towards the close, dreading no treachery on the Emperor's part in her sweet, dense reliance on the honour of others. But she was warned in time, either by the suspicion of her

brother or by some watchful friend. Tradition records that Constable Bourbon, who had loved this gentle and courageous woman, could not stand by and see her condemned unwitting to a dreary imprisonment. After many a debate, the legend runs, he at last sent secret word to Francis, that if Margaret were not out of Spain by the close of December, the Emperor would consider her his captive. From some source, at least, she learned her danger at the end of November. By forced marches and unrelaxed haste, there was just time to reach home in safety.

Margaret set out at once, grieving sore to leave her brother. It was arranged that she should not wait for the Act of Abdication, which should be brought to France by Montmorency, whose ransom was paid by Francis, and who would leave Spain at the new year. Thus, should she fail to arrive in time, the letters patent would none the less be safe. So, in sore distress of mind, the poor sister departed.

All her hopes had come to nothing; all her endeavours had failed. There was still an endless prospect of exile or captivity before the adored brother and king to whom she said "Adieu!" perchance for ever. How willingly would she not have stayed behind and shared his prison! But she had a task to perform, another service to render. She must return to France, attend to his affairs, and educate his children. If she let fall her burden, there was the less hope for him.

She wrote to Montmorency from Alcala, the first stage of her journey, on the 20th November:—

"My Cousin,

"This morning when I awoke I received your letter, and I leave you to think if I was glad to hear

news of the King. As for my news, the body is but too well; but the spirit, I cannot deny it, remembers that which is left behind. Do you know that all night long I held the king's hand, and would not rouse myself in the morning, so as to have that pleasure a little longer? I try to take this departure as well as I can; but succour me with news of him as often as you may. Let me hear some good news—if you have any to tell."

That morning of discouragement and poignant regret was the first of many such days. She can think of nothing but the brother she has left. She encounters Brion, going with news from the frontier to the King. "Would to God," she cries, "that it were I returning! My speed would be nowise Brionnicque." But every day takes her farther and farther away. At last she writes to the brother whom, after all her pains, she has left unaided, and beseeches him to let her return and share his danger. She writes vaguely and strangely, feeling the risk to Francis if her letters fall into the secret and suspicious hands of Charles:—

"SIRE,

"That which you were pleased to write me, saying you would tell me further, has made me go on; hoping, moreover, that you would not leave the straight road, and flee from them who, for all their happiness, only desire to see you, *though worse off than before.*" (Is this a last prayer to give up Burgundy and be free?) "Let my intention be prescribed, if you should ever need the honest and ancient service which I have borne and bear to your good grace. And if the perfect imperfection of a hundred thousand faults make you disdain my obedience—then, at

least, Sire, do not increase my lamentable misery by demanding experience in addition to defeat, knowing my impotence without your aid, as you shall learn further by a sign I send. And I ask for the end of my misfortunes and the beginning of a good new year, only that you may let me be for you some little of that which infinitely you are to me, and will be to me, without ending, in my thoughts. And awaiting the joy of seeing you and of speaking with you, Sire, my desire of meeting presses me to humbly beseech you to let me know the answer by this messenger. And, if it be no trouble to you, I will set off at once, feigning another occasion. And there is no stress of weather nor roughness of the roads, that will not be turned for me into an exceeding pleasant repose. And I shall be most grateful to you. And yet more grateful if it please you to bury my letters in the fire and my words in silence. Else you will render worse than dead my miserable life."

Francis had the force to refuse this agonised appeal. He neither called his sister back nor yielded Burgundy. He sent her on to France and she obeyed, though sick at heart and shorn of all natural trust in her own efforts, "of which you know the impotence without your aid." But since the King commanded it, she travelled on, and on the 15th December she was home in France; she was in her mother's arms.

Back in France at last, and back again without the good news she had gone so far to get. Back in a disappointed, weary, restless, and ironic country. Back to hear the people singing in the streets, no longer of Ogier and Charlemagne, but a new satirical ballad:—

Rens, rens-toy, Roi de France,
Rens-toy donc, car tu es pris!

Back to confront Parliament with a writ of abdication, and a dissatisfied country, with the news of a Regency of women. Yet not for lack of striving was her task undone.

What else could she have done? Any peace that Charles would grant must, of necessity, dismember France. "And so," concludes the Bourgeois of Marseilles, "the said lady returned by land, and she made no good cheer, and not without cause; for she could not agree with the Emperor that her brother should be ransomed by money, but they demanded a portion of the realm, which we could not grant without great loss and dishonour.—*Dieu per sa pietat nos mande bueno pas.*"

CHAPTER VII.

1525–1530.

QUEEN OF NAVARRE.

Scarcely had Margaret returned with her mother to Lyons, on their slow progress from the frontier to the capital, when they were joined by another fugitive from the Emperor's prisons. Henry d'Albret, the young King of Navarre, had been taken captive with Francis; and since February he had been imprisoned in the fortress of Pavia. Despairing of any deliverance, one moonlit December night he dressed himself in his page's clothes and let himself down from his window into a dried-up moat, leaving his servant sleeping in his bed. The next morning a feeble voice behind the curtains answered the turnkey, whom a second page assured that the King was ill that day; nor till the night was the farce discovered, when the gaoler generously pardoned the two devoted pages. Meanwhile their master, a daring lad of two-and-twenty, escaped as best he might towards France, "*intempeste noctis silentio, et lune claritatis favore proadjuvante,*" as a contemporary narrated to Wolsey. On Christmas-eve he reached St. Just-sur-Lyon. It

was nearly a year since he had breathed freely, and now he was safe in France.* He rested there two days, whence he wrote to his chancellor to announce his escape; and then he made his way to the court of Louisa. He knew the Regent well; for on his mother's death, in 1519, the young King of Navarre had been sent to the French court, where Francis had shown great favour to the spirited and clever lad. There, too, he must often have seen Duchess Margaret, then a charming young married woman, the centre of a brilliant court, whom he should now meet in her widowhood, mournful and sick at heart.

But if he found her no longer the star of a court, he found her the heroine of Europe. Her embassy, though seemingly fruitless, had at least established her devotion and her address. Charles V. declared he had not thought it possible a woman could speak so well. Young Henry d'Albret, impetuous, and always ready to fall in love, gave the reins to his admiration for this brave and tender woman. They had many adventures to tell each other; many an instance of the Emperor's perfidious coldness. Margaret, who ever since her journey into Spain hated Charles with a vigorous hatred strange in that kindly heart, found ample sympathy in Henry d'Albret, to whom the Emperor was not merely an ungenerous captor, but the usurper of his kingdom.

Another occasion for friendship lay in the tolerance with which the young King viewed the new ideas of reform. Béarn had never been a narrowly Catholic state; Margaret, often sorely grieved by the cruel

* The traditional date of this escape, 11th April 1525, followed by Génin, must be inexact, since in a letter to Helié André, dated 27th December 1525, at St. Just-sur-Lyon, Henry d'Albret narrates his escape as having happened a few days before.

intolerance of her brother and the Cardinal de Tournon, must have turned for sympathy to this young Béarnois who, like herself, dreaded the Inquisition as the deadliest blight that could fall on any kingdom.

Thus they had two essential points in common: unity of interests and religious sympathy. For the rest, Duchess Margaret was a charming woman of the world, socially and intellectually the superior of Henry; and she was the sister of the king whose influence was most necessary to him. He was an impetuous, brave, ambitious youth; sufficiently resembling her knightly ideal to attract her interest, unfortunate enough to command her compassion. He was poor and valiant, he was kind and just to his subjects; and these would be great merits in the eyes of Margaret. That he was headstrong, fickle, and violent was scarcely apparent; and he was so young. He had, indeed, much in his favour. "Had he not been so given to women as he was," says Bordenave, "he would have been irreprehensible. He loved his people like his own children." Margaret, listening to all his generous plans on behalf of his subjects, became warmly interested in their ardent and unfortunate young king. And he wished nothing more than to marry the only sister of the King of France.

But in this early spring of 1526 Margaret had much to do beside talking with Henry d'Albret. In February Anne de Montmorency returned to France, his ransom paid, with the news that Francis was concluding a treaty with Charles, to whose sister Leonor he had been formally betrothed on the 12th February. The approaching release of the King gave great satisfaction in France, but not the joy, the outburst of

thanksgiving with which she would have hailed it on the morrow of Pavia. The King's deliverance meant poverty and dismemberment to France; meant the imprisonment of the Royal princes. And it was barely four months since Francis had sworn that he would rather die in prison than subject her to such disgrace! The King was to be the King again; but no longer Ogier, no longer Roland. A note of satire pierces through the songs which the people made about their prince in his hard captivity:

Courrier qui porte lettre,
Retourne-t-en à Paris;
Et va-t-en dire à ma mère
Va dire a Montmorency,
Qu'on fasse battre monnoie
Aux quatre coins de Paris
S'il n'y a de l'or en France
Qu'on en prenne à Saint-Denis,
Qui le Dauphin on amène
Et mon petit fils Henry,—&c.

There is no condition he will not grant for freedom's sake.

It was not only gold, not only the Royal children that Charles demanded; he required the province of Burgundy. And those that surmised the contents of the peace could not know that the King in prison had signed before witnesses two secret protests, whereby he declared that a prisoner under lock and key is in no wise constrained to keep a forced obligation.

In this month of February, when Montmorency brought the news of the treaty into France, the children who were to be exchanged as hostages for their father were themselves very ill with measles (or so Margaret calls their illness, probably scarlatina) accompanied with long and severe fever. "Monsieur

d'Angoulême," she writes, "took it with a very bad fever; and then M. d'Orléans, but he was not so ill; and then Madame Madelaine, but very slightly; and lastly, for company's sake, M. le Dauphin, without either pain or fever. And now they all are quite cured and very well. And M. le Dauphin is doing wonders at his lessons, mixing with his schooling a hundred thousand other occupations; and there is no more question of flying into passions, but rather of all the virtues. M. d'Orléans (Henry) is nailed to his books, and says he will be good; but M. d'Angoulême (Charles) knows more than the others, and does things which seem rather prophecies than childish play; so much so, my lord, that you would be astonished to hear them. The little Margot is like me: she will not be ill. But here everyone tells me of her wonderful grace; and she becomes prettier than ever was Mademoiselle d'Angoulême."

As February passed away and the children recovered, Margaret had to prepare them for the change to come —for the price the two elder boys, Francis and Henry, were to pay for their father's freedom. She must have spoken to them of the ardent and chivalric Queen, the betrothed of their father, whose wards they were to be. On the 17th of March the exchange was made. The two children were taken to Bayonne, and thence to the river Bidassoa, between Fontarabia and Andail, near Saint Jean de Luz. They and their attendants embarked from the banks of Navarre at the same moment as the boat of Francis left the Spanish border. One moment's glimpse in passing, and the two melancholy children (one eight years old, one seven) were in a hostile country, in the hands of the Constable of Castile. One happy, careless

glance, and Francis was on the friendly shore, had leapt on his horse and made it prance and curvet as he cried: "Now, at last, I am a King again!"

Francis was not yet actually in his own kingdom, but in the territory of that young King, Henry d'Albret, who, with Margaret, was so anxiously waiting his arrival. Francis was at first indignant when he heard of the match that he was required to sanction; for Margaret, at this moment, was half-promised to the Emperor of Germany, to the King of England, and to Constable Bourbon. But, in the first moment of his return, he would not show himself ungrateful. Many friends awaited him at Bayonne, eager to clasp his hand again—Margaret, happy and well, whom he had last seen so miserable in his prison at Madrid, and Henry d'Albret, his fellow-captive at Pavia, now his host. There were also Louisa, his mother, the faithful and politic regent; and Montmorency, who had concluded the negotiations that Margaret had begun. Two women, moreover, eager and fearful beyond the rest, watched the King, and watched each other, to see which he first would greet. Francis turned at last, and, passing by Madame de Chateaubriand without a word, went up to a blonde and handsome Norman lady, Mademoiselle Anne du Heilly de Pisseleu, a maid of honour to his mother, a talkative, lively creature, suspected of Huguenotism, to whom he had written a letter in verse from Madrid.

Now Francis had recovered kingdom, freedom, mother, sister, mistress, and friends; but the price was still to be paid—not only the ransom of two million golden crowns, but the province of Burgundy. As for Burgundy, Francis intended to leave that debt

unpaid. He displayed to his Parliament the two secret protests that he had made in prison; he called a Council of Notables at Cognac, who voted unanimously against the separation of their province from the realm of France. The Pope, the Parliament, France at large, approved the non-execution of the treaty. "A captive in bondage," cried Francis, "has no honour, and can bind himself to nothing." But, if the province was not ceded, a paladin surely would have returned to his prison, even as John of Burgundy returned to London.

"Nay," cried Francis; "John found in Edward a generous conqueror, who lodged him in his palace, admitted him to his table, and to all the amusements of his Court; therefore, John treated Edward as an equal and a friend. But the Emperor, forgetful of our kinship, forgetting that prisons were made for criminals and not for kings, made me feel all the horrors of a dungeon, and barbarously caused me to despair. How many times have I not told him that I had but the usufruct of my realm, and could not act without my subjects and my laws? But his blind cupidity has taken himself in his own net."

The indignation of Charles availed little. Rome, England, Turkey, all sent expressions of their sympathy to Francis. All that Charles could do was to take the French attendants of the little princes and send them to the galleys. As for the children themselves, they were safe in the charge of Leonor.

Francis, at home, was King of France again—King of France, but no paladin of chivalry. Perhaps the worshipping eyes of Margaret, who had so praised him for his deed of abdication, perplexed him now in his royal state at Fontainebleau; or perhaps he only

wished to reward the devoted sister who had dared so much for him. For some reason, Francis withdrew his opposition to the marriage of the Duchess Margaret with the King of Navarre. He showered presents and royal promises on his sister and her lover, assuring them that he would reconquer the lost province of Navarre from Spain for Henry d'Albret. The other pretenders to Margaret's hand had all withdrawn. A chill enmity separated Charles from France; Henry of England, preferring the maid to the mistress, had set his lustful heart upon Anne Boleyn; Constable Bourbon, in this very year, was killed while leading his victorious armies on to the sack of Rome; and on the 24th of January 1527, Margaret was married to the young King of Navarre.

It was a strange, impoverished, beautiful kingdom to which Henry d'Albret took his bride, in the autumn of the year, when they were weary of the festivals of France—a new and almost a foreign country. "I have been here five days," says Margaret, writing in October from Béarn, "and I scarce begin to understand the language." In the north, all round the capital of Nérac, stretched the dreary Landes, wastes of ash-coloured sand, purpled here and there with heather, streaked with dark lines of pine-wood and forests of cork-oak, ended only by the horizon of the sea; miles of undulating, desolate heath, with here and there, cropping the scanty herbage, a flock of sheep, guarded by a shepherd rudely clad in skins—a strange figure against the sky as he strode over the sand and over the bushes on the enormous stilts the peasants use there. And Pau, the southern capital, was no less different to the placid and splendid courts of France—a high-lying,

steep little town, with a small fortress-like castle, and beyond, the white serrated peaks of the Pyrenees, full of robbers then, and of bears and wolves, with all round, in the lower hills, villages, where lived those poor and swarthy peasants whose language Margaret could not understand. For some years she did not love this sharp, foreign, mountain country; she stayed there but for a month or two in the year, fleeing gladly back to Fontainebleau, where her brother was turning the great hunting-lodge of the French kings into a summer-palace more magnificent than dreams.

For home was still to Margaret in France. She had no children in her Castles of Béarn. Her little son had died soon after birth. Her daughter, Jeanne, was not quite two years old when Francis placed the poor solemn baby in a castle of her own at Plessis-les-Tours, afraid to leave her with her parents, lest Henry d'Albret should betroth her to a prince of Spain. Margaret was childless, and her husband was unfaithful. Still, after a few years' marriage, her thoughts began to turn towards her distant subjects of Béarn.

For there was no great need of her at the Court of France. Leonor had come from Spain, bringing back the two little princes; but she came home to find her husband fickle and unfaithful, and no disappointment is so embittered as that of the disillusioned idealist. The ardent, chivalrous Leonor was a disappointed woman. Still, she had a certain hold upon her husband, though infinitely less than belonged to pretty Anne de Pisseleu, now Duchess d'Étampes and the King's acknowledged mistress. Francis had these two women; Louisa had her son, her political ambition, and her grandchildren; the very children themselves had a new mother. So Margaret began to listen to the impatience of her

husband, eager to be back among his own people, dumbly enraged with Francis who had taken his infant daughter from him. Thus, in the end of the year 1530, it happened that the King and Queen of Navarre went back into their own country, and ruled their kingdom from their Court of Nérac.

CHAPTER VIII.

NÉRAC IN 1530.

Ci entrez, vous, qui le sainct Evangile
En sens agile annoncez, quoi qu'on gronde.
Céans aurez un refuge et bastille.
* * * *
Ci entrez, vous, dames de hault parage
En franc courage. Entrez y en bon heur
Fleurs de beaulté, à céleste visage,
A droict corsage, a maintien preude et sage.
En ce passage est le séjour d'honneur.
* * * *
Ci entrez, vous, et bien soyez venus,
Et parvenus, touts nobles chevaliers.
Frisques, galliers, joyeux, plaisants, mignons,
En général tous gentils compagnons.

So runs the inscription over the door of the Abbey of Thelema. Whether in designing that perfect Court, whose motto was *Fay ce que vouldras,* since the virtuous wish nothing else but honour, whose splendour outrivalled Bonnivet or Chantilly, whose library contained all books of Greek, Hebrew, Latin, and French, Spanish and Tuscan, where Lutheran refugees were received and honoured, where all the ladies were noble

and honourable, and all the knights were sprightly and joyous: whether in designing this Abbey of Thelema, Rabelais had in mind the little Court of Nérac, we cannot here decide. Let us only say that to the Queen of Navarre, *Esprit abstraict ravy et estatic*, Rabelais dedicated the third book of his *Pantagruel*; that he was protected by her friends the three Du Bellays; that he was intimate with Clément Marot, with Étienne Dolet, with Desperriers and Calvin, and others of the persecuted scholars whom she protected. And let us own that much such a Court as Thelema was held at the castles of Nérac and of Pau; a Court of scholars, of poets and thinkers, who fled thither from the stake or from the dreadful convent *in pace*; a court of charming women, at once good and gay; and of men as light-hearted as the King, and as courteous as the Queen.

Henry and Margaret, early estranged at heart, had one great interest in common: the desire to improve this desolate princedom of Béarn. Henry, at his own cost, drained and cultivated the sandy Landes, planted them with vineyards and cork-oak woods, and imported labourers from Saintonge. Henry built a great cloth-mill, and taught his subjects how to weave the fine Pyrennean wool they sheared from their mountain herds. Henry established courts of justice throughout his kingdom, and reformed the ruin and disorder into which the whole land had fallen. And Margaret rebuilt the castles of Nérac and of Pau, and adorned them with the famous library that she bequeathed to Fontainebleau, founded hospitals and orphanages throughout her kingdom. Margaret succoured the poor, herself visiting the sick and consoling them. Finally, she made of this nook of Southern France

(always hostile to the power of Rome and even now counting its Protestants by thousands) a refuge for whosoever was persecuted, and whosoever was poor or oppressed.

There was much need of such an asylum, for the hatred of the Sorbonne towards the new ideas became with every month more virulent and more capable. In the preceding year, in 1529, Margaret herself, in continued supplication, had been unable to save Loys Berquin, a learned gentleman of Artois, from the stake. He had been burned alive; and the flames of this bonfire lit up many pale and scared faces throughout the whole of France. Roussel, Lefêbvre, Calvin, Baduel, d'Arande, all her old friends and her masters of Meaux; Marot, Desperriers, Antoine Heroet, gay young poets and gallants in her service, suspected of heresy no less than she herself, all these and many others looked to Margaret in anxious appeal. In settling at Nérac, she made a welcome home for all of these. The children of her adoption, and the children of her bearing had alike been taken from her. Margaret at Nérac received all that were exiled and all that were oppressed to be as her sons and her daughters.

Queen Margaret made the exiled Roussel Bishop of Oloron; though he preached in lay dress, and in the tongue of the people. She had Lutheran services held in the castle. Calvin, Michel d'Arande, and Lefêbvre she sheltered in her house. She paid the schooling of Baduel and other young divines. Her court was a home and a refuge for all who fled the wrath of the Sorbonne. Clément Marot, poet and Lutheran suspect, who had been her secretary at Alençon, was made her Gentleman of the Chamber at

Nérac; together with Bonaventure Desperriers, *le joyeux Bonaventure*, whose atheism had brought him into almost equal disrepute. Thus Nérac gradually became an asylum, not only for austere reformers, scholars, and thinkers, but for the lightest singers of airy badinage, the wittiest and most frivolous of men of letters. For all alike were suspected in the eyes of the Sorbonne; and, as Melancthon wrote, "all students and all scholars having the title of Frenchmen put their natural hope in her Majesty, as in a divinity." But the court was not entirely made of theologians and poets, and was by no means a haunt of pedants alone. Many charming ladies, whose names we still remember, added a charm to the safety of that refuge; ladies whom Marot celebrated in his clear, neat, crystalline verses; ladies who, at Margaret's feet, presided over what was virtually the last of the old French Courts of Love: Hélène de Tournon, the beautiful and witty niece of the Cardinal-Minister of Francis; the gentle Florette de Sarra, whom Margaret loved, and whose name alone remains to us; and, fairest of all, Isabeau d'Albret, the sister of the King; "*Isabeau, ceste fine mouche,*" whose white throat and large eyes, whose sweet manners and girlish queenliness, are familiar to us even now, whose *petit ris follastre* rings still through Marot's verse, Isabeau, whose love-match with M. de Rohan, an impoverished Breton noble, whose debts, disasters, and ruin, made for many years the chief care of her kind and active sister-in-law. For it was Margaret who succoured the charming, thoughtless girl in all her misfortunes, settled her affairs, sheltered her homeless head, and brought up her children as they had been her own.

Margaret had helped the match between Isabeau

and her lover M. de Rohan. To Margaret Francis applied whenever the necessities of the court required some difficult alliance, some rebellious young people to persuade, some ruthless parent to soften. She was a kindly match-maker; and though she preached implicit obedience to authority, she would not interfere between lovers: "Between ourselves," she says, "we poor homely women understand not how to spoil such honest love." She was, indeed, the natural protectress of young people: her niece Madelaine, in love with the King of Scotland, betrothed elsewhere; Isabeau de Rohan, falling from misfortune to misfortune, till she becomes the poorest gentlewoman in France; Margaret of France, wan with grief for the death of her sister, the Scottish Queen; Mademoiselle d'Estouteville refusing to marry a man who does not love her; the orphan Charlotte de Laval: all these young girls, and many others, whose names and characters grow familiar to us through the letters of Margaret, are sheltered, as it were, under the folds of her mantle, as the virgins of Saint Ursula in the pictures at Cologne.

In the refined, artificial society of Nérac, old forms of gallantry survived and new ones were invented. "For with regard to gallantry," said Brantôme, "this Queen knew more about it than about her daily bread." The romantic, mystical temper of Margaret, which found no pleasure in the actual looseness of the times, was strongly attracted to the semi-chivalrous rites which were the dangerous shadow of that laxity. The court of Nérac was a veritable *Puy d'amour*. The heart no less than the soul was regent there; and though Margaret had no lovers, she had more brothers by alliance, sons by alliance, platonic enthusiasts, and adoring protégés than any other queen in Europe:—

Par alliance ay acquis une sœur
Qui en beauté, en grâce et en doulceur
Entre ung millier ne trouve sa pareille;
Aussi mon cueur à l'aymer s'appareille
Mais d'estre aymé ne se tient pas bien seur.

"And so my heart prepares to love her, but is not sure of being loved." This is the tenor of all contemporary verses rhymed to Margaret, whose bitter-sweet favours Jacques Pelletier deplored. Marot calls her, in reproachful admiration, "*La mal-mariée qui ne veult faire amy*," and his poems to her breathe a surprised respect. But though the Queen of Navarre was actually a very virtuous woman, we cannot but own that this dangerous atmosphere of Nérac, this subtle intermingling of mysticism and gallantry did gradually vitiate the purity of her thoughts, and prepared the correspondent of Briçonnet to become the author of the *Heptameron*.

The wife of Henry d'Albret, the unchilded mother of Jeanne, the absent sister of Francis, had need of such unsubstantial and flimsy affections to stuff an unsatisfied heart. The young King of Navarre, eleven years younger than his wife, was very early tired of conjugal fidelity. A vain, fluent, boastful creature, with the eloquent mediocrity of the Méridional, he was at once proud and jealous of the ascendancy of Margaret; and more than once it needed the interference of Francis to persuade this agile, talkative, brilliant young King, with his facile violence and his easy repentance, to treat his faded wife with due respect.

But if the home of Margaret at Nérac was neither quite happy nor quite free from dangerous tendencies, it was a shelter for many who otherwise must have perished. Not entirely noble in itself, it was yet a

radiating centre of benevolence and humanity. The Renaissance of Letters, frightened from Paris by the fires of the Sorbonne, took shelter in the castle there; and when that refuge grew too dangerous, the mistress of Nérac gave her guests the means to travel to safer places, despatching Marot to Ferrara, Calvin to Geneva, others whither was best for them; sending as much as four thousand francs at once to the refugees in Switzerland. For all the artificial chivalry, the elderly philandering, which disfigured the purity of Nérac, it was truly the "sojourn of honour." The young were safe there, the old were sheltered there. And this court of literary exiles was none the less the heart of its country; thence justice and law, active beneficence, wealth, and civilisation were circulated through Béarn and Navarre, making of a half-savage kingdom a prosperous and happy place. And so, this little court of Nérac persuades us that a movement—that a woman—intrinsically a little artificial, lax, and worldly, may none the less, by the sheer force of human tenderness, become the salvation of things nobler than itself.

CHAPTER IX.

(1529–1535.)

THE SORBONNE.

No less at Fontainebleau than at Nérac, Queen Margaret was the patron of the Renaissance, and the champion of the learned. She fostered the natural love of Francis for art and letters, and encouraged him to defy the restrictions and rigid dogma of the Sorbonne. Francis, who was sensitive to any interference with his kingship, was easily convinced that the Sorbonne lessened his authority by its presumption; and in such a mood his sister found it easy to persuade him to found a secular college in Paris, to confer an eternal benefit on Learning.

Margaret was not alone in her endeavour. Jean du Bellay, the younger brother of the vigilant Guillaume and the wise Martin, was Cardinal of Paris. He was suspected of a leaning to Reform; it was even said that, spite of his red hat, he was secretly married to Madame de Châtillon, the excellent governess of Margaret. He was a brilliant, adequate, and tolerant statesman and scholar. His influence, it is needless to say, with that of his two brothers, was ever thrown into Margaret's scale. The Renaissance in France

had no more energetic champions than the three Du Bellays.

Guillaume Budé, the great Greek scholar, who, on his wedding-day lamented that he had but six hours left for study, was the librarian of Francis. Pedant as he was, narrow and dogmatic humanist, he was none the less devoted to the cause of learning. He did good work in the revival of Letters. Among other scholars, says a contemporary, Budé shone as the sun among the stars. To him, to Jean du Bellay, to the Queen of Navarre, Michelet gives the triune glory of founding the College of France. This is a little hard on Francis, who already in 1521 was inspired with this idea; it is, however, safe to say that to these three persons belongs the honour of infusing into the volatile king, sufficient energy and hardihood to make so fine a thought a deed.

Margaret, Cardinal du Bellay, Budé, these were undoubtedly the guides and inspirers of Francis. But there was a whole public seconding them, demanding their succour, crying for safety and legality. Paris was full of men of learning, even as Fontainebleau of architects and painters. Étienne Poncher, Bishop of Paris, Loys de Ruzé, a president of Parliament, were the leaders of a circle abounding in wisdom and enterprise. The Estiennes, the learned printers whose wives and children could all speak Latin, to whom is due the New Testament of Lefêbvre d'Étaples, the first book of the Reformation, these men, workmen and scholars at once, learned, heroic in their patience and labour, had gathered about them a society of humanists and doctors, to whom they submitted the texts issued by their press. Lascaris the Greek, Oronce Finée the mathematician, Rhenanus, the historian of Ger-

many, Alexander Rauconet, Musurus, Paul Paradis, Vatable, Toussaint, Danès, scholars and philologists, these men, who did for France what Pico and Politian did for Italy, gathered, as round a sanctuary altar, round this printing-press of the Estiennes. Through them, no less than through the humane Margaret, the brilliant Cardinal du Bellay, the profound Budé, it was rendered possible for Francis to found the College of France.

The university was no shelter to men such as these. "*Græcum est, non legitur,*" taught the Sorbonne; "*Cette langue enfante toutes les hérésies,*" preached the monks; and if Greek, the tongue of pagans, were forbidden, yet more intolerable was Hebrew, the language of the Jews. To shut France close within the narrow fold of Rome, ignorant of any tongue but her own, dreaming of no glory and no ideal but the supremacy of the Church; this was the aim of the Sorbonne. But the aim of the King was to throw wide every gate and break down every barrier, to open the East and welcome the learning of the Arab and the prowess of the Turk; to ransack the past for the guidance of the present; to establish a France which should face the glories of Greece and Rome and not be abashed: a France of palaces, peopled with artists and scholars, splendid in battle, yet more redoubtable in her invincible peace; a Catholic France, which, holding one hand to Soliman, the other to the heretic North, should reconcile humanity.

For eight years the King, a true Valois, audacious in conceiving, slow in the act, had revolved in his mind this glorious idea. In 1529, urged by Margaret and the scholars of her court, he gave it the first germ-like shape. No sooner was it founded, than far and

wide through Europe spread the fame of the brilliant secular College of France. Year by year, as its fame and its students increased, chairs and endowments were added to the first poor foundation. In 1529, the College begins with a professor of Greek and one of Hebrew: that is all. By 1530, two chairs for Greek, two for Hebrew, one for mathematics. In 1534, Latin follows; medicine and philosophy in 1540; these are quickly succeeded by endowments for jurisprudence, for Arabic and Syriac. Physiology, the rights of man, the East — these are the doors opened by the new secular college. In these twelve years the destiny of the genius of France is decided, the character of France has shown its bent.

To this impulse the Sorbonne opposed itself with violence and fury. "If we may believe our masters," says the contemporary *Histoire Ecclesiastique*, "to study Greek and to meddle, let it be never so little, with Hebrew, is one of the greatest heresies of the world." And Henri Estienne, in his apology for Herodotus, complains that Greek and even Latin are esteemed "*luthéranifiques et hérétifiques*." To such an extent, he adds, that Master Béda, in the presence of King Francis, first of the name, retorted to the late Guillaume Budé that Hebrew and Greek would be the source of many heresies. In this way learning and science were tabooed as Lutheran. It is necessary to insist upon this point in order to understand the ferocity of the Sorbonne; in order to appreciate the motive which, for the moment, fused the Renaissance with the Reformation. These humanists and pioneers, for the most part Jewish or foreign of origin, professed the Reformed faith as an excuse for lax Catholicism. On the other hand, the most earnest souls in France

looked to the New Ideas as an escape from the degrading laxities, the soulless unmeaning of sixteenth-century religion. They hoped for purification and reform in the Church itself; while the Patriots desired to see the restriction of the temporal power of Rome; both wished to decentralize the Church, to restore the Gallican branch to its old national position. All these different strains of dissent were firmly welded into one by the ignorant persecution of the Sorbonne. But this movement was not yet Protestant; it was still very practical, very undefined; little concerned with theories or ideas. "Thank heaven," cries Margaret, "we are none of us Sacramentarians!" To establish secular education, print the Bible in French, teach Greek and Mathematics, sustain the Gallican branch, this is the programme of the movement; this, and no actual schism. Briçonnet, Roussel, the Du Bellays, Margaret, did not desire or dream of a Church wholly severed from the Catholic authority. It was a sort of Home Rule which they demanded: to be Catholics, but reformed and Gallican Catholics. It was in truth Calvin the Frenchman, Calvin the man of system and practice, and not Luther the German, the mystic and prophet, who organized and consolidated the Protestant Church.

This point must never be forgotten in seeking to understand the history of Margaret of Angoulême. That life, else so hopelessly confused, so vacillating and effortless, becomes clear and definite when once we understand that not the Reformation but the Renaissance inspired it. Never was a spirit less dogmatic or insistent than hers. She was no martyr, no saint or prophetess. She was merely a woman filled by the new fervour for learning, the new reverence

for knowledge; the renascent love for art and poetry, no less than for ideas and for science. Under one wing she shelters Janet, Cellini, Marot, Desperriers; under the other, Calvin and Vatable. Full of imagination and keen intelligence, instinct with compassion and liberality, her nature would have been as much revolted by narrow Protestant dogma as by Catholic tyranny. Read the contemporary Lutheran historians, and it is clear that the ignorance and brutal injustice were not entirely upon the side of the Sorbonne. Coarseness and violence were as rife at Geneva as at Paris, and Margaret would not have been happy in Calvin's City of God. She would have pitied Servetus as sorely as she pitied Loys de Berquin. Her rare and modern spirit would ill have understood that hard-and-fast salvation of Geneva, that satisfaction in the damnation of disbelievers. Human life, knowledge, tolerance and freedom, were dearer to her than any code or any creed. In fact, her code and her creed was her belief in these things; her practice of human kindness. Those dying words of hers, so hushed-up, so indignantly refuted, express the principle of her life: "What I have done I did from compassion, not conviction."

At this moment, let us remember, Calvin is still in France, a youth of twenty; his *Institutio* is not written, Geneva is not yet a Church, Protestantism still is undetermined. Margaret and her court of scholars personify the earlier, vaguer Reformation. Mystical and learned, eager to discover the secrets of heaven and earth, they were more anxious to learn than to proselytize; and the College of France is the Church that they established.

It is important to insist on this eclectic and cultured

moment of the Reformation, because Margaret never outgrew it; and was condemned as an apostate by the later Protestants, who had advanced, merely for standing still. On the other hand, exasperated by the growth of heresy, the Court receded from its tolerant position. So that Margaret, who at this moment touches Calvin, as it were, on one hand, and the Court on the other, is gradually left at equal distance from either, suspected on both sides of half-heartedness and heresy.

This is indeed the climax of her influence, the most brilliant moment of her career. From among her servants and her masters are sought the staff of the College of France. Toussaint and Danès had taught her a little Greek; it is said that Paul Paradis had given her lessons in Hebrew. Henri Estienne was under her protection, no less than Vatable, Lascaris, and Aleander. Marot, the Lutheran poet, her *valet-de-chambre*, is entrusted to rewrite in modern French the ancient masterpieces of the quickly-growing language. She is the centre of the movement; the King himself is under her influence. The Sorbonne, made keen by hate and fear, raises its threatening head, observes, and considers how to strike.

To strike was only self-preservation, so bold and rapid became the impulse towards reform. In December 1530, the Protestant princes of Germany entered into a league, and signed the Treaty of Smalcald. England was on the point of actual revolt from the Roman sway, and France seemed like to do as much. The Emperor no less than the Sorbonne dreaded lest Francis should join the Protestant league. For the new ideas received every encouragement in Paris, and in September 1531 it seemed as if the last

check were removed with the death of Louisa of Savoy. While she had lived, the Catholic party had trusted to her influence on her son and daughter, who passionately loved her; but now the innovating Margaret, unrestrained by her mother, would sit, sole in influence, at the right hand of the King.

For an end had come to the passionate life of Madame. Her genius for intrigue, her scheming avarice, her intense and active nature, lay idle in the grave. She was loth to quit the stage on which she played so principal a part; all her sufferings had not reconciled her to the thought of rest. Constantly ill, never free from gout and colic, she was still resolved to act, to witness. But throughout the summer of 1531, Margaret's letters reveal to us the gradual wasting of the frame which contains this violent spirit. "She is not yet so strong as I desire." "Madame was yesterday so weak, I feared she would have fainted." "She is so variable." Margaret says no more than that in her fear to alarm her brother. But though she refrains from afflicting him more openly, she writes of nothing but her mother's health. To-day she is better, she had a good night, she will certainly recover; yet, ah! sometimes she seems so weak! Turning from the fierce history of those times, in which Margaret's gentle name, like a wing-bound dove, is bandied as a missile from one party to another, there is nothing more pathetic than to open the volume of her letters, to read these lines breathing love and anxiety, from which all else is banished, all hint of speculation, all interest in great affairs, to perceive this Lutheran heretic, hushed, self-unconscious, gentle, sitting by the bedside of the Catholic mother she adores, and gazing with anguish into the paling, dying face.

The death of Louisa gave a swift impetus to the movement of reform.

In 1533, Robert Estienne printed his Latin Bible. In the same year, a cooper's son from Noyon, a certain young Chauvin (or Calvinus, as he latinized the name), a Picard bourgeois, strong, hard, dogmatic, litigious, had composed a book, as yet only known in manuscript, the *Institutio Christianæ Religionis.* It was audaciously dedicated to the King, and bore the motto: *Non veni mittere pacem, sed gladium.* The Rector of the Sorbonne preached a sermon by this young Calvin to his scandalised magisters. What! was the heresy infesting their very stronghold? The imprudent Rector had to fly for his life to Switzerland. A warrant was issued against him; another against the obnoxious Calvin, who, less agile, was run to earth at Angoulême. Now let the Lutherans and Zwinglians behold to what ends led their monstrous opinions! Parliament, Sorbonne, all good Catholics, prepared for the auto and the triumph—when, at the last moment, their prey was wrested from them: Margaret, the pernicious Queen of Navarre, threw herself down before the King and entreated his pardon for Calvin. It was granted.

She was verily the head and front of the offending, this light-minded, mystical, learned young Queen of Navarre. At all costs, she must be warned, crushed, superseded. A little before this she had published at Alençon a poem, weak, mystical, inflated with a vague ideality: *Le Myrouer de l'Âme Pecheresse.* It would be hard, in this mist of nebulous piety, to name precisely any error of commission. But the Sorbonne, supremely irritated against Margaret, discovered therein divers heresies of omission. There

was no mention of the Saints in it, neither of Purgatory; the prayer to the Virgin, the *Salve Regina*, was paraphrased in honour of Jesus Christ. Here the prompt and aggressive Béda perceived his opportunity. In the next Index of the works forbidden to the faithful, the Sorbonne published the title of the *Myrouer de l'Ame Pecheresse*.

All this took place in 1533. Francis, ever devoted to his sister, still devoted to the cause of progress and tolerance, ruminating an alliance with Soliman and the Protestant League, was thunderstruck with indignation. He sent for the Rector of the Sorbonne and ordered a complete list to be made of those magisters who had composed the Index. He caused the Bishop of Senlis to defend the work before the University, which meekly retracted its accusation. The occasion was made into a triumph for Margaret.

Béda and his party were not silenced yet. A few weeks after this the students and four professors of the theological college of the Navarrene Fathers at Paris publicly performed a farce in the great hall of the building. Margaret was the heroine of this ingenious representation. In the first act she is represented as leaving her spindle and letting fall her distaff, to accept from an Infernal Fury a French translation of the four gospels; Margaret then becomes herself a Fury, a spirit of controversy and bitterness, devoured by insensate tyranny, infected with the cruelty of Hell. Such was the movement of the play; such the portrait of the endearing and sweet-hearted sister of the King. Francis was terribly incensed. He sent the four Navarrene Fathers to the prison of the Conciergerie, whence only at Margaret's most earnest intercession they were, after some days, set free. Béda

suffered at greater length. Suspicious, either that the farce was performed at his instigation, or else that he was actually the author of it, the King sentenced the combative syndic to two years of exile.

The Sorbonne was in despair. It did, indeed, appear impossible to assail this high-throned heretic; moreover, the exile of Béda struck their weapon from their hands. For a while all was quiet. Then an event occurred to set the Protestants hopelessly in the wrong. Whether laid in train by the coarser and more blundering Reformers, or the fruit of unscrupulous Catholic zeal, none may decide.

During the night of the 18th October 1534, the doors of the cathedral and town halls of Paris, Rouen, Meaux, and other cities, even to the gates of the castle of Amboise where was the King, were covered with placards, assailing in the grossest terms the mysteries of the Catholic faith, denying the Mass, the Host, the prayers for the dead: whatever was held most mystical and sacred. Nothing could be more brutal than the feeling which prompted this offence, unless it be the feeling which punished it. All that was tender and holy was publicly outraged here; the mysterious sacrifice of the Mass, the faith that rescued the dear but sinful dead from the pains of Purgatory. More than this. In Paris there stood an image of the Mother and Child, held especially venerable and beloved. Many prayers were addressed to this succourable Madonna; her image in the public street brought to the roughest heart a reminder of gentleness and purity. This dawn of the 19th October shone upon a desecrated shrine. The head of the Virgin, the head of the Babe, had been rudely chopped from the trunks, and lay, fallen and mutilated, in the gutter. When the King heard

of it, he burst into tears. That cruel blunder, that heartless revenge, lost the cause of the Reform. Many a stake should smoke, and many a rack should strain and creak, in expiation for that murdered stone.

This affair of the placards sent a horror pulsing throughout the length and breadth of France. It frightened from the Reform its gentler and more reverent adherents. Margaret herself, ever compassionate, felt it necessary to declare her Catholicism to the world. Francis henceforth became no less combative than the Sorbonne itself. He set out at once for Paris to sift the matter. No sooner had he reached the capital than in the space of a single night the placards burst out again in hideous flower. They were on all the buildings, all the churches. Even into the King's cabinet they brought their obscene and scurrilous defiance. A vague fear and horror took possession of the town. All through France throbbed that sense of outraged pity for the murdered Redeemer which lay at the bottom of mediæval persecution, blent with that maddening terror of Supernatural Evil, which gave their keenest edge to the cruelties that punished witchcraft. Heresy was, indeed, a sort of witchcraft, a spell wasting the souls of men before the fires of Hell, even as the grosser witches knew how to make men's bodies melt and wane. It is difficult now to place ourselves in this attitude ; yet, unless we do so, we can never understand the lesson of the past.

When the King heard of the Virgin's mutilated image, he burst, as I have said, into tears. But his anger was not to end in weeping. A severe inquiry was instituted, and all accused of complicity in this matter were brought to Paris and tried there. The party of the Sorbonne pretended that they had dis-

covered a Protestant plot to murder all good Catholics while at Mass. Nothing can be less founded than such a charge, obviously trumped up to secure a conviction. Without it the conviction was secure. Twenty-four of the accused were sentenced to be burnt to death.

On the 29th January 1535, a great expiatory procession traversed Paris from the Louvre to the Church of Nôtre Dame. The King walked in this procession, bare-headed, holding in his hand a lighted torch. He was followed by his children and the flower of his court. His beautiful mistress was there, with Queen Leonor and many fair and joyous ladies; but Margaret had returned to Navarre. She had left Paris, heavy-hearted, some weeks before, seeing, as it seemed, all her dreams of wide culture, beneficence, and toleration crumble suddenly into nothing, and the old reign of Darkness engulf the world once more. Indeed, on that morning of the 21st January 1535, the Renaissance, the College of France, the treaty with the Turks, appeared shocking and anomalous; for Paris had returned to mediævalism. It might have been Louis XI. and not King Francis who walked there bare-headed, holding his lighted torch. To the sound of solemn chants, the procession wound through the streets. Not only the court was there, and the King and Queen, and the two hundred gentlemen of the royal household, but the whole Sorbonne (triumphant over the absent Queen of Navarre), the Clergy of Paris, the Swiss Guards, the Heralds, the Court of Parliament, the Municipality, the Guilds of Capital, the Courts of the Realm. It was a procession of several thousand persons, all alike in their pity and their burning indignation, that marched from the

Louvre to Nôtre Dame. When we realise this, we understand the sequel; we understand how little yet, for all its brilliant veneer of culture, France was impregnate with the true modern spirit. The Middle Ages were reared up close behind, and their tremendous shadows fell across that world to darken it.

At Nôtre Dame there was High Mass; thence the procession moved to the Bishop's palace, where, seated on a throne, the King addressed the multitude. In his words, burning, thrilling with mediæval passion, we catch no echo of the familiar speech of the Father of Letters. The debonnair, free-thinking dilettante of the Renaissance has disappeared; the mutilated image of the Virgin has roused in his place the latent fanatic, present ever behind the most modern shows of the double-natured sixteenth century. Louis the Saint or Louis the Cruel might have spoken as he spoke. So easily a strong passion refutes the painful progress of centuries.

The multitude stood in the hall and in the court outside; the King on his raised throne spoke to them, the tears in his eyes. He spoke of the blasphemy and profanation, and of that day's expiation. He denounced the enemies of God and the Church. "And if my own right arm," he cried at last, "were infected with this heretic pestilence, I would cut it off and cast it from me; and if one of my own children were so miserable as to favour it, I would with my own hand sacrifice him to God's justice and my own."

Ominous words for the absent and suspected Queen of Navarre. The Sorbonne, listening, must have triumphed; for those wise magisters did not yet know how volatile were the moods of their brilliant King. For the moment there was no more fiery Catholic than

Francis. He went himself, with the ladies of his court, with the fervent outraged Leonor and the laughing Madame d'Étampes, to see them light the pile where six of the accused should suffer that evening. Throughout December the Autos had flamed and smoked; already ten Lutherans had died that winter at the stake. In general they suffered singly; but to honour so tremendous an occasion, no less than six could die.

"Three Lutherans," says the Bourgeois of Paris, "and a clerk of the Châtelet, and a fruiterer, and the wife of a cobbler and a schoolmaster; this last for eating meat on Fridays." These were to be the victims. They were fastened by long iron chains to a lofty gibbet, and swung to and fro in and out of the burning fire. Madame d'Étampes is said to have complained of the sickening odour of the burning flesh; of the horrible sight of the convulsed and blackened bodies. Poor, easy-natured Anne de Pisseleu, yourself suspected of Lutheran leanings, the spectacle may well have turned you faint with fear and horror! But the Bourgeois of Paris does not mention the presence of the King at the actual sacrifice. The Court, I incline to believe, turned home before it came to that.

Throughout the spring the stakes are constantly piled, the gibbets swing their smoking freight to and fro. And, whereas in the earlier months the victims were humble and ignorant folk, as time goes on we note a richer prey. In November "a cobbler's son," "a printer," "a mason," "a tailor," "a young servant": in such wise run the entries. But in the spring: "a rich merchant, from fifty to sixty years of age, *estimé homme de bien*," "a goldsmith," "a painter," "a young Italian merchant," "a scholar," "one of

the King's choristers," "an attorney." Here it is the middle-class that is attacked.

Nor was this all. Not only life but reason was menaced. On the 26th February the King suspended the action of the Press. No more books were to be printed. So ordained the friend and patron of the Estiennes, the Founder of the College of France. But the thing was impossible; France could no longer live, work, pursue her daily affairs, without the Press. Not only Jean du Bellay and the learned Budé, but even the reactionary Parliament protested against so grotesque a prohibition. The King was content with imposing a censorship of the Press.

So completely had Francis turned upon his steps. Perhaps we find the reason in the fact that Béda, the intrepid Béda, returned from exile in 1535, accused the King himself of leaning towards heresy. Francis threw the rash syndic into prison again; obliged him to do public penance, in a sheet and holding a candle; finally confined him in the prison of Mont St. Michel, where the cutting winds and stormy weather of the ensuing spring cooled for ever the fiery heart of Béda. But Francis, though avenged, was not appeased. A horror of his own laxity was upon him. Still the persecution continued; till finally the Protestants of Germany complained of his rigour towards unfortunates whose only crime was professing the religion which they themselves, the King's allies, believed. They also deplored the rumoured alliance between Francis and Soliman. The King's answer has been preserved. He, to some extent, admits a friendly intention towards the Porte, acknowledging that he had received the Turkish Ambassador. The Emperor, he reminds them, had done as much; and it is well

to abstain from war with the Turk. As for the penalties he had, against his will and nature, inflicted on his Lutheran subjects, it was rather their sedition than their religion which he had punished. So little objection had the King to the convictions of his allies, that he would willingly receive any theologian that they might choose to send to his court.

This is in the summer of 1535. Another wind blows, and the weather-cock King has veered from his pathos and horror of January. On the eve of a new war with the Emperor, Francis desires to conciliate the German princes. His keen and subtle political instinct recalls him from the dreary paths of Spain.

CHAPTER X.

(1536–1538.)

CHANGES.

On the field of Pavia, Francis had sent his ring to Soliman. The King had established the College of France, in spite of the Sorbonne. In defiance of the Church, he had endowed two chairs of Greek. In founding two Professorships of Hebrew, he had taken its reproach and its squalor from the Ghetto. The Jews, the learned, these two persecuted and endangered peoples he had glorified and reassured. In sending his ring to Soliman, Francis embraced the last enemy of mediæval Christendom—the Turk.

In the Turk Francis perceived the one ally that could truly aid him against the Emperor. Venice, the enlightened eye of Europe, already perceived the undue predominance of Austria, and saw in Soliman the natural balance. With Venice, whose trade required the Porte; with England, whom the Church no more controlled; with Scotland, Denmark, and the Saxon princes—France might head a formidable confederation, a capital danger to the Empire and the Inquisition. Such a league was the dream of the

sixteenth century, from the Battle of Pavia in 1525 to the renewed project of Spires in 1573. But, as a rule, the Christian princes were as parochial in their hatred of the East as in their yet bitterer hatred of Christian heresy. The Catholic hated the Turk and the Huguenot—the Huguenot the Catholic and the Turk. It was the merit of Francis to rise above sectarian considerations, to propose a great political alliance between the Protestant North, and Catholic Venice, and Catholic France, and Mahommedan Turkey. Such an alliance would have been the last word, the greatest masterpiece of the Renaissance. Humanity, tolerance, freedom of judgment, would have been naturalized thereby in Europe, and the dreadful history of the 17th century might have had a different record. But the thing was difficult beyond belief, for each State suspected the other, and all alike suspected Soliman. He was reckoned, as in their State-papers England and Spain and Germany alike conspire to name him, "the Turk, the Common Enemy." Francis would find it no easy task to make the most enlightened kingdoms of Europe accept his alliance.

For great and deep spread the horror of the Turk. Venice was too wise, England too far to share it, save in a nominal and intermittent fashion; but in Germany the dread of Soliman was as natural and fierce as superstition. Nor was this wholly an unreasonable fear. Selim was dead and gone, and in these later days the Ottomans themselves were admirably well disciplined and merciful. In 1526 two hundred thousand Turks traversed the Empire; they marched along the roads, avoiding the fields lest they should ruin the harvest. Not a village was burned, not a hamlet plundered. Any soldier caught in the

act of pillage was hung to the trees by the roadside, whatsoever his rank or station. In 1532 Captain Rincon, the envoy of Francis, visited the prodigious camp of Soliman, thirty miles in extent. "Astonishing order, no violence. Merchants, women even, coming and going in perfect safety, as in a European town. Life as safe, as large and easy as in Venice. Justice so fairly administered that one is tempted to believe the Turks are turned Christians now, and the Christians Turks."

The Turks themselves were just, wise, moderate, and humane. But, alas! the Turkish armies were not all composed of Turks. The fierce Algerian pirates, slave-dealers, kidnappers of boys and women, were the allies of Soliman. The terrible Khair-Eddin Barbarossa bore the title of Turkish Admiral. This should have been the double and exacting task of Francis: to reassure Europe against the Turk, to secure Soliman while excluding Barbarossa.

The first step on this errand he had taken on the morrow of his capture at Pavia, when, drawing from his finger his last possession, he had said to his attendant, "Take this to the Sultan!" The second step was passed in this year 1536, when, on the eve of battle with Charles, Francis signed a secret treaty with Soliman. The third step, the open acknowledgment and precision of that treaty, was still to be taken, if ever it should be taken.

"The Venetians are nowe al Turkiche and alienated from th' Emperour utterly," writes Harvel, so late as the spring of 1539; "and I am of constant opinion that the French State seketh to perturbate the world in th' Emperour's detriment." Indeed, while Francis and Rincon and Du Bellay were welding the French

treaty with the Turk, the Queen of Navarre was as busily employed in seeking to bring England into a French alliance. She herself interviewed the English Ambassadors, and in our collection of Foreign State-papers her name is at least as frequently quoted as the King's. "The Queen of Navarre is a right English woman," said Francis to Sir William Paget. "She is always a member of the King's Secret Council," writes Matteo Dandolo, Venetian Ambassador in France, "and, therefore, is obliged to follow the King wherever he goes, though narrow and inconvenient be her lodgings."

It was a hard life; but Margaret was happy in this career of active and beneficent devotion. In these years of work and counsel her letters are brilliant and contented—letters of how different a sort to those inspired by the quietism of her youth (1520–24), the unrest and superstition of her age (1547–48). In this year 1536, while the question of the Turco-Huguenot alliance was filling the secret counsels of France, war fell out again with the Emperor on the old question of the Milanese. The Queen of Navarre was now, perhaps, the busiest woman in France. Her letters are full of the details of the campaign. She encourages her husband and his kinsmen to raise experienced regiments for the war; she inspects the troops with her cousin, De Carman; she goes to suppress a rising of the disaffected Basques; she and Montpezat discover and interrogate a spy. And all the time she is investigating the ruined fortunes of Isabeau de Rohan; she is securing the advancement of her old play-mate, Anne de Montmorency; she is assisting her husband, and sounding his trumpet in the ears of Francis.

Henry of Navarre, in his quality of Governor of Guyenne, raised an army and led it to the southern frontier. Margaret's letters to Montmorency (very frequent at this moment) are full of allusions to her young husband, to his valour, his troops. We see in her mind the happy contrast that she makes between this eager service of the brave young King of Navarre and the cowardice and failure of the husband of her youth. Margaret, we feel, is no less anxious than her brother to wipe out, on a fresh field, the disgraces of Pavia.

"I have had news," she writes to Montmorency, "of your soldier, the King of Navarre. He is, I fancy, on the march, for he has determined to depart without going to Bayonne—for by this time he has the letters in which I told him that the Emperor is at hand, and that you await him at the camp of Avignon. I am sure he will not fail you there. I pray you, my son, that you will hold him as a brother, for I am sure that you will find his love so good and firm that you will not repent you for having taken him to your heart."

The preparation for the campaign went on with enthusiasm. The army in Piedmont met with brilliant success. The camp on the frontier was impatient for battle.

"My Lord," writes Margaret to the King, "I came yesterday evening to this place of Monfrin (near Avignon), where is the division of the King of Navarre, which I have seen in battle array. I will say nothing of the men-at-arms; but there are few soldiers better mounted than our light horse. You will be pleased with the Gascons; and would to God the Emperor would try to cross the Rhone while I am here for,

with the succour you mean to send us (and but little is necessary !), I would gladly undertake, on my life —mere woman though I be—to keep him from passing."

The Emperor did not pass. His armies starved and thirsted on the devastated frontier. Victory attended the arms of the French; but Death, the faithful retainer, fought now, as ever, upon the Emperor's side. The war shrank into insignificance beside a blow that, not without suspicion of treason, changed the future of France.

For the young Dauphin, Francis, the idol of his father, the heir of the kingdom, suddenly died. He was sailing down the Rhone to join the King in the camp at Valence. He broke his journey at Lyons, and there, one day, being overheated from a game of tennis, he sent his page to draw him a cup of water from a well. It is probable the young prince succumbed to a violent pleurisy. But, when he died that night in extremity of torture, all France declared that Montecuculi, the Dauphin's cup-bearer, had smeared some Spanish poison of the Emperor's upon the edges of the cup.

More than mourning and anger were to come of this event. The Dauphin, Francis, had been, in mind as well as in body, singularly his father's child. He was of Francis's party : gay, chivalric, gallant, perhaps unstable, liberal, easy. But Henry, the second son, was now the heir. The unusual character of this youth of eighteen made him already remarkable at Court. Henry was taciturn, sardonic, melancholy.

"He seems all nerve," says Matteo Dandolo; "he is so strong and tall. But he is dark, pallid, livid—even green—and it is said he was never seen to laugh

a hearty laugh. Still, he is, in his way, a good companion to his own friends, and loves the liveliness of his younger brother. He has a small head, large eyes looking down, thin temples, and a narrow forehead. He is brave, and loves hunting and fighting; and he is very religious, and will not ride on Sundays."

Another Venetian ambassador adds a stroke or two to the portrait:—

"He is melancholy, saying little, and devoid of repartee; but when once he *has* said a thing he holds to it *mordicus*, for he is very clear and decided as to his opinions. He has a mediocre and rather slow intelligence. He is virtuous and reputable, and spends his money liberally but wisely."

"*Il est né Saturnien*," says Simon Renard—and truly the star of Saturn sheds its singular and pallid radiance upon his course. As a child his father had not loved him. "*Je n'aime pas*," he had said, "*les enfans songeards, sourdaudz et endormis.*" And dreamy, dull, and sleepy were still the manners of the Prince. Four years of his childhood had passed in the Spanish castle where he had been a hostage for the brilliant father who did not love him. And it was his destiny that he should henceforth detest the land of his captivity and make war upon it, while he himself was imbued with the spirit of it, while he himself should turn the volatile, spontaneous gallic character of his father's France into a thing as pallid, as precise, as decorous, as the Emperor's Spain. Under him the long reign of the *Style soutenu* begins in Art and Letters. He is slow, solemn, romantic, and yet conventional. In his long straight nose, his fine anxious brows, his singular large eyes, we see the evidence of a certain ideality, but no power to direct

it. "A saturnine," says Simon Renard; and another calls him, "a King of Lead." He is, indeed, save when in battle or following the hunt, an inert and sombre youth, with his crooked, sinister mouth, his black, straight hair, his lustreless, black eyes.

In 1533 the King, anxious to conciliate the Papacy, had married Henry to the heiress of Florence and Urbino, the Pope's niece, Catherine dei Medici, a plump child of fourteen, with full lips, large eyes, a retreating chin—a certain vulgar prettiness. She had caressing, charming manners, that made everyone at Court in love with her—except her sombre young husband, with his solemn air of a Spanish grandee, unapproachable and noble. For him his little bride, during her whole life, cherished a devoted passion, that was, perhaps, the only loveable thing in her career. But Henry was at first supremely disgusted with his marriage. Her quickness in pastimes, her lively manners, her neat-ankled prettiness, could not make him overlook the trading ancestry of his bride. Twenty years later the Venetian Ambassadors inform us that all the Court of France looked down on Catherine because she was not of royal blood :—

"She can never do them favours enough. If she gave away the whole of France, they would scarcely thank her, because she is a foreigner; and she has neither credit nor authority, since she is not of royal birth."

"Bah! it is only the shopkeeper's daughter!" said Madame Diane to the little Queen of Scots, more than twenty years after this. And, indeed, though a good enough match for the Duke of Orleans, little Catherine dei Medici, not beautiful even at

seventeen, was, doubtless, made to feel herself a very poor alliance for the heir of France. "They have smirched the Valois lilies with a mercantile alliance!" cried the Emperor. Henry was ashamed of his wife, and did not love her. As time went on, and the plain, bourgeoise, unlovely girl did not even give him an heir, he began to think of a divorce. But all the pride and all the real love of Catherine's heart arose and pleaded against him with King Francis. And Henry was finally brought to reason by a very great lady with whom he was in love, Diana of Poictiers, the widow of the great Seneschal of Normandy, and the daughter of that Saint Vallier who had nearly perished for the conspiracy of Bourbon. This most important and almost princely personage, though she called Catherine a daughter of shopkeepers, persuaded Henry to treat her better, and even to reward her with a moderate affection.

"It is wonderful how Madame la Sénéschale has made another man of him," says Marcus Cavalli. "He used not to love his wife at all, but was vain and full of mockery."

For Diana of Poictiers had an almost boundless influence over Henry. She was no longer young. At the time when Montmorency brought her and Henry together in his house at Écouen she was thirty-eight and he not quite eighteen years old. Everyone said that Henry would never fall in love; but Montmorency divined better. He determined to attach the young Prince to this woman, twenty years his senior, who was of Montmorency's party — a Catholic among Catholics, a Conservative, hating the Turco-Huguenot alliance, and hating Spain also, though filled with the spirit of Spain. Diana was still a very beautiful

woman. Her abundant hair, jet-black and curly (sometimes she dyed it red), made a frame for a pallid delicate face, beautiful with that peculiar Renaissance beauty, so illustrious and strange, which affects the imagination more strongly than the senses. Her lids were a little tight over the eyes; the small, close-shutting lips tight also; the straight, small nose prominent in profile; the delicate eyebrows arched and tense above the well-set eyes; the forehead round; the neck beautiful but slender; the whole face secret, unemotional, unexpressive, yet most provoking to the imagination.

The whiteness of her pale complexion was a special beauty of *la grande Sénéschale*. In some sort, her life was devoted to preserve it. Every morning she arose at early dawn, and bathed herself, winter and summer alike, with icy water. Then, by the light of the day-break, she went riding through the fields round Paris, or in the woods at Fontainebleau. Before the world awoke she was at home again, reading in her bed till noon. Then began her regular life of a great lady at Court, resolved to marry well her little daughters, resolved to keep her power as a beauty, to make herself a power in politics. Later on, we know that all the secrets of the State were debated in her house at Anet. Even then, we may be sure, no secret of the Catholic party was kept from her; and as soon as she became the mistress of Henry, she devoted herself to be his counsellor, his adviser, giving him wise instruction, and even lending him her money.

Catherine, seventeen years old, plump, merry, affectionate, had not known how to win her husband's love. It was different with Diana. The charm of an elder woman, her refined sweetness and delicate superiority,

were, perhaps, the only wiles that could have caught the Dauphin. And Diana, with the dignity, had not the disadvantage of her years. Hers was not the loveliness that fades with youth. Her penetrating Armida graces were unchanged, her grand style, her grave and delicate air, gained rather than lost by the sparer outlines and paler tints of waning youth. Tall and slender, she was ever soberly clad; she affected no rivalry with the cloth of gold and gems of younger beauties; she wore black and white in honour of her widowhood. When the Dauphin became her lover, she still wore her quiet weeds for her dead husband, and he also took for his badge the mourning-colours of the man he had supplanted; all the Dauphin's Court assumed the hues of widowhood.

No one seems to have found it strange. Diana was so inaccessible, so remote, and distant, that rumour itself could find no fault with her. She continued the most pious, the most Catholic, the wisest, the most respectable of ladies. Many said, and say, that she had conferred on Francis the affections that now she bestowed on his son. There is no evidence. There was no evidence then to what degree the Dauphin was her lover, though the Revolution which desecrated the grave of Diana and of two dead babies in her chapel at Anet has settled that question for a later world.

"She has undertaken," says Cavalli, "to indoctrinate the Dauphin, to correct and counsel him, and to urge him on towards all actions worthy of him."

The moon was her emblem, the crescent moon, with the equivocal device, "*Donec totum impleat orbem.*" And if the star of Saturn shone fitly on the Dauphin's birth, for her the natural planet was the pale, the solemn, the enchanting moon. Cold, narrow-hearted,

fanatic rather than religious, curious rather than impassioned, Diana was truly a daughter of the moon, a moon that stooped to kiss her gloomy young Endymion. The Dauphin fell at once under her enchantment. He was then eighteen; but when he died, twenty-three years later, King Henry II. was no less devoted. It was a possession rather than a passion. The amazed courtiers laughed in their sleeves. The country people, awe-struck by her name, said that she had enchanted Prince Henry with a philtre. They found her, in her lunar beauty, the image of that pale Diana of the Forests, whom witches hymn by night; and they declared that every morning of her life she drank a draught of molten gold.

This, in a sense, was true. Diana knew how to lend and how to give, but she knew still better how to grasp. Her delicate, tenacious hands filled themselves with the wealth and the power of France. She and Montmorency stood one on either side the melancholy Dauphin and whispered their counsels in his ears. Round them swiftly gathered a strange, sad, rigid, fanatic little Court, an assembly of the orthodox, the pious, the *bien pensants*, the centre of all that was Romanist and Latinist, a society illumined by the dubious crescent of Diana, and dressed all in black and white in honour of her widowhood.

Naturally, this new little Court gained immensely by the death of the Dauphin Francis. Now that Henry was the heir, his faction became scarce less puissant than his father's. It stood in the sharpest contrast to the splendid, free-living, tolerant Court of Francis, the Court for which Andrea and Lionardo had painted, the Court which established the College of France, which dreamed of the League with Luther

and with Soliman. The object of the one party was the expansion of France; they would give one hand to the Turk and one to the Huguenot; they would draw from Italy, from the East, from the Jews, all that could enrich their country. But the aim of the younger party was the centralization of France; they wished to develop a civilization of their own, owing nothing to foreign influences. The party of Francis gave us Rabelais, Marot, the Estiennes, the Castles of Blois and Chambord and Fontainebleau, the germ of the collections of the Louvre, and the College of France. The party of Henry, less concerned with ideas, and far more delicate in expression, enriched the world with Ronsard and the Pleiad, with Anet and Écouen, with the Art of François Clouët and his school. A delicate, precise, charming, but artificial beauty centres in that Court: a second renaissance not passionate for truth, for knowledge, for freedom, for humanity, like the movement that inspired the life of Margaret of Angoulême.

The first consequence of the Dauphin's death was immensely to increase the prestige of Montmorency. He was now on the topmost pinnacle of success. Both Margaret and the Dauphin had used all their influence in his favour. All parties were for him. His skilful generalship had made a victorious campaign. Francis, perceiving the Grand Master to be a keen and ready soldier, and being himself influenced by Margaret's praises of her friend, determined to reward him richly. On the disgrace of Bourbon, the dangerously powerful office of Constable of France had fallen into a wise desuetude. The King determined to revive it for Montmorency. Margaret, never shrewd or suspicious, rejoiced in this triumph of her friend. The news

gave general pleasure at Court, for the Dauphin was Montmorency's close ally, and Queen Leonor and Madeleine de Montmorency were near and zealous companions.

These were all for the Grand Master. No one else was powerful enough to hazard a remonstrance. Yes; there was one—one unlikely and ridiculous Cassandra. Madame d'Étampes, hearing of the King's determination, prayed, wept, urged, implored Francis not to give that post to Montmorency. But for that wise once his pretty Anne begged of Francis all in vain.

In the spring of 1538 the ceremony took place. Leading the Queen of Navarre by the hand, Montmorency advanced to the steps of the throne. Francis, taking the sword of state from its scabbard, placed it, bare-bladed, in the Grand Master's hand. At that moment the heralds waved their flags and cried: "*Vive de Montmorency, Connétable de France!*" The rash deed was done.

Montmorency was now only second to the King. In addition to his immense wealth, his office of Constable brought him an income of £24,000 Tournois. Constable, Grand Master, Minister of Finance, Anne de Montmorency had virtually the kingdom at his command. He could rise no higher, be no greater. Neither Francis nor Margaret could aid him more. He became henceforward less the servant than the rival of the King, chief in the Dauphin's rising Court, counsellor of the outraged Queen Leonor. He scarcely concealed his contempt for the magnificences and frivolities of Francis, nor his aversion for the Lutheran views of Margaret. No question now of repaying old benefits, of requiting a long affection. Montmorency, the harsh, frugal, inquisitorial, and dogmatic Con-

stable, conscientiously disapproved of Nérac and its refugees. He felt no scruple in trying to destroy the influence which had helped him to his seat of honour.

So, when the peace was made, despite his promises, despite the benefactions of Margaret, Montmorency raised no plea for the restoration of Navarre. The French retained Hesdin and Savoy; there was no question of the rights of Henry d'Albret; and one day, a little later, when King Francis complained of the singular growth of heresy: "Sire, if you would exterminate it," said the Constable, "begin with your Court, and first of all with your sister!"

The cruel word missed its mark. "She loves me too much," said Francis. "She would never believe other than I believe, nor anything that would prejudice my estate." The shaft glanced by King Francis, but it lodged in Margaret's heart. In this year, 1538, her frequent letters to the Constable come to a sudden end. From that day she never liked nor trusted Montmorency, and for a year and more she sat, in vague helplessness, watching all her work unravelled by this man, watching Francis drifting towards the Emperor in desertion of his natural allies.

CHAPTER XI.

(1539–1540.)

A FALSE STEP.

At this time the Emperor's good town of Ghent revolted against him, and beseeched the King of France to grant his protection to Flanders. Here was a brilliant opportunity for Francis. By espousing the cause of Protestant Flanders he would virtually conclude a league between himself and the great schism of Northern Europe, while in defying Charles he would give a pledge to Soliman. This was the dread of Montmorency, the dear desire of Margaret. All through the winter of 1539, the spring of 1540, she is busy with the English ambassadors, trying to win her brother to make a league with Henry VIII., trying to estrange him from the influence of Montmorency.

But Montmorency was all in the ascendant now, and the Turco-Huguenot alliance had lost some of its first attraction to the volatile mind of the King. Francis, under Montmorency, began to think again of Milan, to wish again for the friendship of Charles. Therefore, to the surprise of those who believed themselves his real allies, Francis refused the offer of

Flanders. He even promised Charles a safe passage through France if he chose to go that way to reconquer his dominions.

No doubt the Emperor in return promised many golden things. We know that he had sent a messenger to Francis, earnestly beseeching the right to pass through France, and hinting at rewards too great to specify. Francis believed him, and he came—came, to the bitter disgust of the Queen of Navarre, the evident displeasure of Madame d'Étampes, the fiery indignation of Prince Henry, who remembered those French attendants who, accompanying him into captivity, had been sent by the Emperor to the galleys. But Francis insisted on a noble reception for his guest; a certain chivalry of instinct forbade him to recall the dungeon of Madrid. So the Emperor came, to the disgust of France, to the bewilderment of the Protestants, and Soliman, and Venice.

"These men are not a litil astonied," writes Harvel from Venice in November 1539, "to undirstonde of the Emperoure's journey to Flanders by the wais of France, with few horsis. And certeinly they are matters of grete admiracion and exciding the reasons of men to consider, so grete and perpetual enemies have so grete confidence together."

Not only Harvel but all Europe believed that the Emperor, afraid of the power of Francis should he join the League, preferred to grant him Milan and keep him as a friend. The Venetians, thinking themselves forsaken, were in great distress and bewilderment. Soliman said, "These Christian princes know not how to keep their word." Henry of England sent his ambassador to Margaret to learn if Francis will in truth incline towards the Emperor. "I fear," says

Margaret at Easter-time in 1540, "I fear the Legate Farnese is trying to draw him from King Henry to the Emperor."

Margaret made as brave resistance as she could. "Never think," she cries to Wallup, "my brother will so lightly lose so faithful and assured a friend!" But in her heart she feels herself powerless to turn the current of her brother's thoughts from Milan. In February she tells Norfolk, "If you would have anything of importance done, seek to win over Madame d'Étampes, who can do more with the King than all the rest. Only she," went on Margaret, "can impress a thing in his head against the Constable; and I myself, when Montmorency had turned the King against me, I had to seek the help of Madame d'Étampes."

"This good Quene is a faythfull frende to your Highness," writes Wallup to Henry VIII. But with the cowardice of her tremulous adoration, Margaret did not dare boldly to oppose the folly of the King. She worked on him vaguely and indirectly, by chance speeches, by the faint contagion of her own convictions, and through the influence of Madame d'Étampes. Even for that she so firmly thought the right and the best, Margaret could not openly remonstrate with her brother's weakness. "These things can only be wrought by Madame d'Étampes," she declares to Wallup. "I will not speak myself. I should be noted partial, and also suspected." And, miserable at her own lack of influence, she cries, with a pathetic denseness, "My brother is of this sort, that a thing being fixed in his head it is half impossible to be plucked away." Poor Queen Margaret!

She could not believe her brother fickle, much less

wrong. In the end of spring she declares to Wallup, "The Emperor is a good man." But she goes on, seeing the truth in one supreme moment of disgust, "The King is too light of credence, and trusteth things willingly." Not only Margaret now began to see how little worth were the golden promises of the Emperor, who, having conquered Ghent, sent word to Francis that he could not give him Milan without the consent of the German Electors. This was a quit for Burgundy, which Francis would not yield without the consent of the Notables. By July there was a coolness between the King and the Emperor, and Francis again remembered the Protestant-Venetian-Turkish League. He sent the Royal Order to the King of Denmark. He sent an Embassy to Venice. "But the Venetians now begin to hate the French," says Harvel. He sent an envoy to the Turk; and for some while offended Soliman would not so much as see the envoy. Francis and Margaret occupied themselves with the making and seasoning of certain wild-boar pasties which they sent to the King of England. But Henry, mindful of the fickleness of Francis, would promise now no help against the Emperor.

Francis, nevertheless, was determined to redeem his slip. It seemed natural to redeem it at Margaret's expense. In order to reassure the German princes, he offered his niece of Navarre in marriage to the Duke of Cleves, a Protestant at heart, and avowedly an enemy of the Emperor. "Flanders I can get at any time," said Francis, refusing to accept the Netherlands in lieu of Milan; and probably he thought it well to have a friend so near at hand. But the alliance, though good for France, would be disastrous to Navarre. It could do nothing for the poor confiscated little king-

dom. It would secure neither France nor Spain. And the future Queen would be an absentee living on her husband's German territory. Henry d'Albret deeply resented the betrothal. But he was too feeble to oppose the imperious brother-in-law, whose pensioner in some sort he was; powerless, although the Estas of his dominions more than once appealed against this peremptory order of the King of France.

It is only at this moment that we fully appreciate the intense and all-absorbing devotion of Margaret to her brother. This whim of his ran counter to every interest of her husband, of her subjects, even of her child. They are all nothing to her. She cannot conceive that they should oppose their will to that of Francis. Even the passionate anger and grief of the little princess did not touch her mother's heart. Jeanne, still ailing, frightened, not yet twelve years old, wept bitterly at the thought of being given to the care of a stranger, different in language and manners. Her proud and sore little heart rebelled at leaving France to marry a simple Duke. Yet she had been very dull and lonely at Plessis. "She filled her chamber with complaints; the air with sighs. One of the fairest princesses of Europe is fading away in tears; her locks hanging loose, undressed; her lips without a smile! And when King Francis heard this thing, he named the lady to the Duke of Cleves without the consent of her father or her mother," declares Olhagaray.

But it was not because of Jeanne's desolation that the King desired to marry her. She was only a glove to fling down in the face of the Emperor, merely a note of defiance to sound in his hearing. She was a pledge to the Netherlands, and to the Lutherans who were favoured and sheltered by the Duke of Cleves.

The little princess must not expect the privileges of a woman. Jeanne could not resign herself to this political necessity. Her father dared not, her mother would not help her. So, taking her case into her own defence, she appealed herself to the uncle whose favourite she was, and whom she knew more nearly than either parent. Having seen the Duke of Cleves, she felt she could never love him; she beseeched her kind uncle not to press the marriage. Francis was very wroth at this questioning of his decision. He imagined, perhaps, that the King of Navarre had urged his little daughter to revolt. His anger came to Margaret's ears. Alarmed and horrified at Jeanne's indiscretion, she wrote to intercede for her rash little daughter.

"But," says Margaret, in a later letter to the King, "if the said Duke of Cleves had been to you all that he ought and that I desired, I would never have spoken against him; we would rather have seen our daughter die, as she told us she should do, than we would have stayed her from going to the place where I deemed she could do you a service." This is no court parlance. Margaret considered that the noblest lot on earth was to live or to die for her brother, the King. Jeanne's revolt, her claims for independence, filled Margaret with something akin to disdain and indignation. She had no pity for the strange proud little girl who, forsaken by father and mother, beaten and coerced, still declared in her weak childish treble that she would never love the Duke of Cleves. Her brother was Margaret's religion; and Jeanne's determination seemed to her as impious as it was disobedient. St. Felicitas might have felt the same had one of her children refused to die for the Cross. She

was resolved that her daughter should not fail the King in his need. Indignant that her daughter, hers, should shrink from so honourable a sacrifice, she was determined to subdue that uncompromising and stubborn spirit; indignant, and with the despotic anger of the worshipper whose idol is outraged.

But Jeanne was no silent martyr. She was a decided, brusque, and valiant nature, very French in type. Under the exterior of a charming and *espiégle* brunette she concealed an immense resolution. The day before her betrothal to the German Duke she called the three principal officers of her household into her presence and bade them witness her protestation. She then read aloud:

"I, Jeanne of Navarre, continuing the protest I have made and in which I persist, say and declare and protest again before these present, that the marriage to be made between me and the Duke of Cleves is against my will; that I never have consented to it and never will consent; and that, whatever I may do or say hereafter wherefrom one may argue my consent, it will be done by force against my will and desire and through fear of the King, as of the King my father, and of the Queen my mother, who has threatened me, and has had me whipt by my governess, the wife of the Bailiff of Caen; and several times my governess has exhorted me, by the command of the Queen my mother, threatening me that should I not do, in the matter of this marriage, all that the King of France requires, and should I not consent, I shall be so flogged and so maltreated that I shall die of it, and that I shall be the cause of the ruin and destruction of my father, my mother, and all their house; and all this has put me in such fear—especially the destruction of my

said father and mother—that I know of no one who can succour me but God, seeing that my father and my mother have forsaken me; and these know well what I have said to them and that I can never love the Duke of Cleves, and that I will none of him. For I protest that should it come to pass that I be affianced or married to the Duke of Cleves, in any sort or manner that may come about, it will be, and will have been, against my heart and will; and he shall never be my husband, and never will I hold him for such, and the said marriage shall be null, and I call God and you to witness that you sign with me my protestation and recognize the force, the violence, and constraint which is used towards me in the matter of this marriage.

"Jehanne de Navarre.
"J. d'Arras.
"Francès Navarro.
"Arnaul Duquesne."

There is no cause without its martyrs. Little Jeanne, sorely against her will, was now to be tied to the rock. The dragon was invited to come and take her; a heavy German dragon, growling an uncomprehended and barbaric jargon. Jeanne regarded him with loathing and aversion. But no Perseus appeared. Jeanne was sent to her mother at Alençon, and the Duke of Cleves followed her there. To Jeanne, young, high-spirited, brilliant, made by her confined and dreary childhood only the more eager for splendour and for Paris, it appeared a cruel lot to wed this German Duke, twelve years older than herself, whose father was a madman, whose manners disgusted her, whose tongue she could not understand. Her mother had no sympathy with this aversion. Remembering her

own first marriage, she did not think her daughter unfortunate. Margaret appears to have liked the Duke of Cleves; and he was at least an earnest against the Emperor. He was gallant in battle, wealthy, tolerant, and a protector of the oppressed. Above all, he could serve her brother Francis. She had small pity for Jeanne.

Nevertheless, having gained considerable influence over Duke William, she managed to ease her little daughter of the most intolerable portion of her burden. She induced the Duke, out of consideration to the childish age and fragile health of Jeanne, to submit to a purely formal marriage, and then to return to Germany, leaving his little bride with her parents for at least another year. Even this respite did not appease Jeanne. The day after her betrothal she signed another protest.

At last the King became impatient. He sent a peremptory message to Margaret, requesting her to bring her daughter at once to Châtellerault, where the Court had removed. The meadows of Châtellerault were overbuilt with palaces and arches made of greenery; jousts and tourneys were held the whole day long. At night they were continued by torchlight, a thing which never yet had been seen in France. Nymphs, dryads, dwarfs, knights, and ladies arrayed after the fashion of Amadis and La Belle Dame sans Merci, hermits in robes of green and grey velvet, all manner of gay and strange masquers inhabited the palaces of boughs. Little Jeanne herself, on her wedding morning, was clad so heavily in cloth-of-gold and silver, so studded and heavy with gems, that she could not walk under the weight of her finery. The King himself was to have led her to the altar. Finding her so weak, a

brilliant thought struck him. Here, in the face of France, in the hearing of Europe, he would exalt the bride of the Emperor's enemy at the expense of the dupe of the Emperor.

The King called Montmorency to him. He told the Constable to pick up the little girl and carry her on his shoulders into the church. Montmorency dared not disobey. The Court looked on and marvelled. Indeed, it was a strange sight; that pale childish figure, stiff with gold, and laden with gems like some barbaric idol; and the Constable of France, the highest dignitary of the realm, turned into a porter for a tired child. Montmorency understood the insult. He was angry and in sore despite; he knew that he served as a spectacle to all as he walked in the triumph of his enemies. "My day is done," he began to murmur. "Good-bye to it, I say!" But the Queen of Navarre was glad, and whispered to those near to her:

"That man tried to ruin me with the King. And now he serves to carry my daughter to church."

Jeanne was married then and there, among all those whispers of envy, hatred, and uncharitableness, married, among the splendour that a country groaned to pay for. The Duke of Cleves at once retired to Germany, and the little bride set out for Pau with her parents.

The jealousy of Francis had not hitherto allowed her to visit her dominions. But now the Infant of Spain could not marry her. On the last day of the festivities, the King sent for Montmorency, and dismissed him from his favour. The Emperor was defied.

CHAPTER XII.

THE LEAGUE WITH SOLIMAN.

(1541–3.)

Francis, as we have said, was now resolved to win back his old allies, to disclose his real relations with the Emperor. For the Venetian embassy the King selected Cesare Fregoso, a son of the Doge of Genoa; for Constantinople, Antonio Rincon, a man of profound insight, one of the few who could answer the question of the East. As far as Venice they were to travel together, then Rincon should proceed alone to the Court of Soliman. The two ambassadors journeyed through Piedmont towards the Po, for, owing to the heaviness and corpulence of Rincon, they had resolved to take boat close to Turin and do as much as possible of their journey by water. On the 1st of July 1541 they reached Rivoli, where they were met by messengers who beseeched them to halt, for news had come to the ears of Du Bellay, which it behoved them to learn before they left the town. At midnight Du Bellay himself arrived; he assured the ambassadors that he had discovered a plot on the part of Del Guasto and the Emperor to waylay their boat, murder them, and steal their despatches. But Fregoso laughed at

this alarm; he had fought against Del Guasto in honourable warfare, and did not believe a great captain would stoop to such a deed. Rincon did not like to hang back alone; moreover, the corpulent ambassador dreaded the long journey on horseback, which Du Bellay advised. He therefore let Fregoso laugh his natural fears to scorn, and they departed by water, "a more easy way," says Du Bellay, "if less sure."

The next day a second messenger overtook the ambassadors. By him Du Bellay sent them accurate details of the ambush laid for them, beseeching them to return, or at least to send by the courier their despatches back to Rivoli, whence he, Du Bellay, would have them safely forwarded to Venice. Either through shame or false confidence, the ambassadors determined to proceed; but, recognising that they had no right to imperil the safety of their message, they sent the despatches back to Du Bellay. Then, urging their oarsmen to make haste, they were rowed down the river all the night, passing Casale without any risk. They were now within a few miles of Pavia. But a little farther down, at a place called Cantalupo, a boat full of armed men suddenly boarded them, murdered the wise Rincon and the brave Fregoso, took the oarsmen and threw them into the dungeons of Pavia. Thus it was supposed the fate of the ambassadors would remain shrouded in mystery. But a second boat, conveying the attendants of Rincon and Fregoso, escaped from the ambush. Rowing swiftly to the bank, the servants escaped ashore and fled into the woods, and thence back to Du Bellay at Rivoli. Du Bellay hushed the matter up until he discovered the prison of the oarsmen who had witnessed the actual murder. This at last coming to his ears, he had the bars of their win-

dows silently filed at night. They escaped; and having, finally, all the witnesses in his hands, Du Bellay turned on Del Guasto and accused him and his master of the crime. Their guilt was proved, and spread horror throughout Europe. "I cannot murder ambassadors like your Master!" cried Francis to the Ambassador of Spain.

And Venice, which could not execute the Emperor or his governor, insisted on the death of the assassins in their employ. So Rincon and Fregoso were avenged.

Charles V. was deeply vexed, not by the discovery of the murder, but by his failure to secure the dispatches. He, however, did what he could, inventing false papers and spreading abroad a rumour that Francis had offered Germany as a prize to the Turk in reward for Soliman's help against the Empire. "It is," says Margaret, with bitter resignation, "only another of his accustomed lies." But the lie did harm to France with credulous Germany.

At this moment Francis might opportunely have avenged himself on Charles. The little town of Marano on the Adriatic offered itself to the French King. The town was small, but the situation was invaluable. Planted between Italy and Austria, opposite Venice and neighbouring the East, Marano would have been a hand at the throat of the Empire, and a hand stretched out to the allies of France. Du Bellay strongly urged Francis to take possession at once. He did, indeed, put some few soldiers in it, but, ever hesitating, the French King vacillated, and shrank from offending Charles so openly. Before his decision was taken, Venice had bought the little place.

Francis had done much to estrange Soliman; he had as yet given no pledge of his good faith. Had

he been able to point to Marano, the Turk might have believed him. As it was, Soliman felt an immense contempt for his credulous and vacillating ally. When Captain Paulin brought at length the long delayed despatches, Soliman refused to admit him to his presence.

Paulin, or Pollino, was a man of low origin, but shrewd talent and plausible address. He suceeeded at last in gaining the ear of Soliman. The Turk promised, at length, to renew his alliance, and to send, next year, should the King require it, an Ottoman fleet to the aid of France. But his faith in Francis was destroyed. Meanwhile, at home, the King, at last awakened, was doing his best to regain his ground with the German Lutherans. But the Emperor's lie fought hard against him; and the news of the recently concluded alliance with the Porte did him harm with the League. "Germany for the Turks," the superstitious Germans heard, under the promises and advances of the King. All that Francis could do was by tolerance at home to give, as it were, a new guarantee to the Lutherans abroad. And his clemency to the rebellious Huguenots of La Rochelle served in some sort as a guarantee of his good faith.

The Court was now all for tolerance and the New Ideas; the Psalms of David, in Marot's version, were set to all the popular vaudevilles, or to airs composed for them at court. For one the Dauphin himself wrote the music. Everyone had an air, a psalm, and a text of his own. Villemadon, Margaret's envoy, marvelled to find the gay court of Fontainebleau thus out-Nérac Nérac. The Cardinal de Tournon looked on aghast. He might have spared his fears; this Lutheranism had no roots. It was but a demonstration

against Catholic Spain, against the convictions of the Emperor. Charles appears to have understood the matter better. He, also, determined to have a device, and sent to Clément Marot, begging him to translate for him the Psalm "Confitemini Domino." If the duel between France and the Empire was to be fought with psalms, Charles would not neglect his weapons. But Charles took a surer means to outwit his adversary. Francis must not be permitted to throw his clemency and tolerance, like dust, into German eyes. Convoking a diet at Spires, the Emperor bid them look around and observe the deeds of this king, so clement in words. In the harbour at Marseilles, a Turkish fleet rode at anchor. Let them ask themselves what convictions inspired this psalm-singing monarch? He was ready to sacrifice St. Peter and Luther alike to Mahomet.

Germany listened; the Emperor's speech, with its caustic sarcasm, could not be refuted. It was almost a truth. For the Turk had revenged on Francis his many vacillations and infidelities. Soliman had indeed sent the promised fleet, for the Turk keeps his word; but the fleet was composed of Algerian pirate-ships, and their Admiral was the dreaded Barbarossa.

Such aid did Francis more harm than good. True, the Algerian pirates were brave and hardy, they filled Marseilles with trade and with gold; but they were lawless and insatiable. From Provence itself, they kidnapped boys and girls for the harems of Constantinople. When the fleet of Francis and the fleet of Barbarossa sailed side by side to the bombardment of Nice, the Germans remembered that old lie of Charles. "Germany for the Turks," they said to themselves. And forgetting a hundred cruelties and persecutions, they rallied round the Imperial standard.

The horror of Germany for France infected the German Duke of Cleves. Horror of France and fear of the Emperor. He had fought so valiantly for Francis, that Charles in his anger had sworn not to leave the Duke an inch of his dominions. The Duke fought well; but at last the growing contagion seized upon him. He threw down his arms and sued for forgiveness, promising to annul his alliance with the Valois. Jeanne, sore at heart, was already travelling to the frontier, to be given up to her abhorred bridegroom, when this news reached her. It appeared impossible. Of his own accord, the dragon had renounced Andromeda. "*Vilain et infame!*" cries Margaret, indignant, thinking of her brother betrayed. But Jeanne is happier than ever she had hoped to be again. They apply to the Pope to dissolve the marriage.

A worse blow struck Francis on the 11th February of this year 1543, when the Emperor concluded an alliance with Henry of England. France was now, indeed, alone. The Turkish admiral had sailed from the coasts of France, where there was no enemy to harass. He had promised to return in case of need; but Francis hesitated to call back so redoubtable an ally. The Lutherans of Germany and the Protestants of England were fighting against him under his enemy's standard. The Emperor was encamped in Champagne. The King of England was before Boulogne.

Francis, at this time, was seriously ill. He could not command his army. Tormented by internal wounds, oppressed by melancholy, he could neither act nor advise. The Queen, agonized by this war between husband and brother, was sick unto death. There was indeed an air of joy in the court of the Dauphin; but in the retinue of the King's favourite son there

was a sense of failure and disappointment. In January, Catherine dei Medici had brought into the world a sickly and miserable son. The child could scarcely breathe, he was so weak. His body was covered with livid spots. A serious obstruction in his head would always prevent him from speaking plainly. Yet, such as he was, he, and no longer Charles of Orleans, was the heir of France.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE HEPTAMERON.

While wars and rumours of wars invaded this distracted land of France, the King had lost his genius for battle and adventure. A restless invalid, prematurely old, he was unable to control the fortunes of his kingdom. The hero of Marignano was no more, nor the chivalric captive of Pavia, whose noble and courtly demeanour in misfortune had been the ideal of Europe. In their stead reigned this sad and superannuated man, consumed by his abscess, tormented with unrest, his kingdom ravaged by his enemies, his Church bewildered by heresy and fanatic suspicion, his Court split up into cliques and angry rivalries, himself the disregarded head of a waning faction.

No one at the Louvre could charm away the melancholy of the unhappy King. The proud and ardent Queen, too long insulted, was only nominally a member of her husband's Court. Shut in her own apartments, with her Spanish suite, her priests, and her confessor, she made of her presence-chamber a little Spain, decorous and fanatic, in which she strove to forget "this Court of France, where God knows how I am treated, and the manner in which the King has used

me." Worn by disappointment and anxiety, she had become a nervous, delicate, and melancholy woman, hopelessly estranged from her frivolous husband.

Madame d'Étampes, who for so many years had taken her place and usurped her duties, was now too anxious on her own behalf to care to soothe the trouble of the King. Should Francis die, what would become of her who for so long, so wantonly, had provoked the anger and hate of the Dauphin and of his stately Diana? What lurid clouds would not cover her when that pale crescent moon had filled its orb? The pretty Huguenot Duchess was in a very fever of anxiety and suspicion. What was the melancholy of Francis to her own?

Nor were the children of the King of much avail. Henry was of the opposite faction; he looked sternly and coldly on the frivolities of his father. The Duke of Orleans, riotous, gallant, high-spirited, the favourite child of Francis, was of little use in so sorrowful a sick-chamber. Madelaine was dead. Studious Madame Marguerite was too young, too inexperienced to help. She lived, for the most, in the decorous Court of the Queen, apart from the dying licentious old King, the selfish, imperious mistress, the riotous young Duke of Orleans. And Catherine dei Medici, who had courted Francis in order to discover his secrets, had not the art to cure a distempered soul. The King was virtually alone in his melancholy and his suspicion.

Then the double war broke out with Charles V. and with Henry of England. Queen Leonor, never hardened to the constant war between her husband and her brother, fell ill of a nervous fever from grief and distraction; the two young princes went to the war; the Court was so pervaded by desolating anxiety, that

Francis, unable any longer to endure his distress alone, summoned his sister from Alençon to Paris.

Margaret had met her brother in April at her Castle of Alençon, and had spent some time in his company, while he directed the arrangements for the campaign in the North. She was, therefore, aware of the further change that his sickness had worked in him. But in April she had still been able to interest him in projects of war and of State; in April she still had held a brief for England, she still had hoped to gain Henry and detach him from the Emperor; in July she found him at war with both alike, confined to his room, without energy, or impulse, or resource: the miserable *débris* of a King.

Her cheerful ardour infused new life into Francis. She roused him from his nerveless melancholy, and made him show himself to the anxious burghers of Paris. She restored him, as far as possible, to his legitimate place as head of the State. She prayed with him and for him, exerting her benign and tolerant spirit to direct him into the way of peace; and, amid these more serious endeavours, she did not forget to amuse. She knew that the most grievous enemy of her brother was neither the Emperor Charles nor Henry of England, but the hypochondriac melancholy which hung like a cloud over his senses. She sang to him the psalms of her *protégé*, Clément Marot. She read to him the novels of Boccaccio, recently translated by another of her gentlemen-in-waiting, Antoine Le Maçon, under her own direction, and these novels became at once as great a fashion at Court as the Psalms of Marot had been a year or two before. For a few hours they even chased away the pain and depression of the King. In this book, says

the preface to the *Heptameron*, "so great a delight was taken by the most Christian King, Francis, first of the name, by my Lord Dauphin, Madame the Dauphiness, and Madame Marguerite, that if Boccaccio, from the place where he is, could have heard their voices, he would have been brought to life again by the praise of such as they."

Soon, however, Margaret was compelled to leave her brother. Peace was arranged with Charles V. on what appeared to be favourable terms. Queen Leonor began to recover from her fever, and was able to return to Court. Notwithstanding the anger of the Dauphin at the sudden termination of a war which he had hoped to lead to a more glorious end, Francis I. was manifestly content. By deserting his ally, Soliman of Turkey, by revoking his protection from the Lutherans, by giving his promise to Charles V. to crush out heresy and subdue the Turks—Francis had secured a splendid inheritance for his favourite son. He had sold his soul for an abundant mess of pottage.

Margaret, the champion of the Huguenots, should have shrunk from an advantage secured by so infamous a desertion. But no; she was carried away by that fatal idolatry for her brother, which deprived her of judgment when he was at the bar. Her brother was pleased, was better, was almost happy, and Margaret exults over the peace between "*le lys et la pomme ronde.*"

As soon as the peace of Crépy was arranged, the King left Paris to hunt in his forests at Romorantin, impelled by that nervous restlessness which hurried him continually from place to place; and Margaret returned to her Duchy of Alençon, to set her affairs in order there. She was glad to leave her brother in a

less miserable mind, yet keen enough to see that his cure was as yet but half begun. He must still be amused, roused, entertained; the on-coming of melancholy must incessantly be watched. And then it entered into Margaret's eager brain to compose another book like those novels of Boccaccio which had delighted him so much, to write a *Decameron* herself, in which the adventures should belong to people at the Court of the King, or, at the least, of his time and country. On her frequent journeys from place to place, she wrote these novels as the horses slowly jogged along with her great curtained litter, "my grandmother holding the ink-horn for her," says Brantôme in his Memoir. And, as she first began to write these stories in that city of Alençon, where she had spent unwillingly so much of her youth, old memories thronged her mind; and many of the adventures of the *Heptameron* take place at Alençon, always "in the time of the last Duke Charles."

It has been the fashion hitherto to date the *Heptameron* too early. Miss Freer, Margaret's principal biographer in England, misled, perhaps, by the constant occurrence of the words Alençon and Argentan, and yet more by an eager desire to do the best for her favourite, has placed the *Heptameron* in Margaret's thoughtless youth. But, after all, the *Heptameron* does not need our excuses for its thoughtlessness. It is gross, but not so gross as the time; it is worldly and amorous, but less so than the Court. On the whole, the remarkable thing about it is the ideal of religion and virtue, which it still lifts, however feebly, in opposition to the gay society for which it was written.

We can see that Margaret has no natural distaste

for the freedom of manners which she has schooled herself to condemn. It is only immorality that meets the censure of Oisille—never indecency. Her blame is an affair of the conscience, not of the temperament. But, even if the book did not painfully attain to virtue, did not attempt to teach a lesson, were there no further intention in it than to amuse with questionable stories, none the less is it plain that Margaret wrote the book, not in her youth, but in her ripe maturity. It is no fault of youthful folly, as I hope to prove. On looking closer, it is, perhaps, no fault at all. At the best and the worst, it remains the pathetic endeavour of a devoted sister to beguile the tedium of her dying brother by the only sort of stories he will listen to; while, at the same time, she infuses, by a strange, incessant twisting of the facts, a lesson of trust in God and in virtue; while she attempts to advocate tolerance, to condemn a corrupted Church. That these morals follow very oddly on the gross adventures of the *Heptameron* must certainly be conceded, for it is not always easy both to point a moral and adorn a tale, and with Margaret the two intentions are equally strong and equally manifest. Still, though often perverse, grotesque, or profane, throughout these stories the Moral, the Ideal, is evident.

It is not difficult to determine the date of the *Heptameron*. In almost every novel of the series we find allusions to events which did not take place till Margaret was certainly middle-aged. To give a few of these: the Regency of Madame (1524–26) is referred to in one of the novels; both Bonnivet and the Duke of Alençon are always spoken of as dead (1525); the League of Cambray (1529) gives rise to one adventure; and in the second story we hear of the little Prince Jean

of Navarre who died in 1530. The descent of Charles V. into Provence is the occasion of another (1536). The murder of Alessandro dei Medici by his cousin Lorenzaccio (1537) is related in the twelfth novel. More than once a reference is made to the sudden death of the Dauphin François in 1536. And Henry and Catherine are invariably called M. le Dauphin and Mme. la Dauphine. The Armistice of Nice (1538), or more probably that of Crespy (1544), is alluded to in the tenth novel. In the twenty-fifth we hear the unedifying story of the love of Francis for *la belle* Ferronière (1539). The novels towards the end were evidently written later than the Introduction (which must have been composed in 1544), because the death of the Duke of Orleans (1545) is spoken of in one; and the marriage of the little Princess Jeanne to Monsieur de Vendôme, which occurred in 1548, is the subject of another.

Margaret died in 1549. The dates given above will prove abundantly that these novels cannot have been the work of Margaret's girlhood. It is clear to me that the *Heptameron* was composed from 1544 till the autumn of 1548. It is, of course, very likely that Margaret had already in her portfolio several isolated stories and adventures, for story-telling was the fashion of the time, and she is spoken of as excelling in the accomplishment. But, as a whole, the book began, most probably, in 1544. In the Introduction, which presents to us the principal personages of the work, the following passage occurs:—

"I believe there is no one among you who has not read the hundred novels of Jean Boccace, recently translated from Italian into French [1543], in which the most Christian King Francis, first of the name,

Monseigneur le Dauphin, Madame la Dauphine, and Madame Marguerite, have taken such delight . . . that the two last-mentioned ladies would fain have done as much themselves, and many others of the court deliberated to do as much—only in one thing differing from Boccace, that they would write no novel that was not veritable history. And with Monseigneur le Dauphin with them, and as many as would make ten persons in all, whom they thought worthy to tell such stories, they concluded each to write ten; but they would not admit students and men of letters to their number, for Monseigneur le Dauphin did not wish that their art should be mingled with this sport. Also he feared that the beauties of rhetoric might do wrong to some portion of the veritable story. But the great affairs that since then have happened to the King [the double invasion, 1543–44], also the peace between him and the King of England [this was not signed and ratified until 1546, but serious hostilities ceased after the peace of Crespy in September 1544; this earlier date must be meant, since no allusion is made to the death of the Duke of Orleans in 1545], and the confinement of Madame la Dauphine [Jan. 20, 1544], with many other things sufficiently important to engross the Court, have caused this enterprise to fall into oblivion."

I believe that a comparison of the dates cited here, and a little consideration of the events of the time, will convince my readers that, in her solitary state at Alençon in 1544, and in her frequent journeys about the duchy, Margaret began the book of which she meant to make a modern *Decameron*, but which her untimely death cut short before the end.

The mechanism of her stories is clearly borrowed

from Boccaccio and Castiglione. A company of ladies and gentlemen of good family have been spending the autumn at the Pyreneean baths. Being surprised by grievous floods and a heavy deluge of rain, the visitors have left the baths and set out for their homes. But the dangers of travel from the swollen rivers, from wild beasts, and yet more savage robbers, has overtaken many by the way; so that of all that society only ten find refuge safe and sound in the friendly abbey of St. Savin. Here they must wait until the floods subside; and, to wile away the tedium of their imprisonment, they tell true adventures to each other every afternoon from the midday dinner till the hour of vespers.

The little company is composed of five noble gentlemen and five ladies. The first to arrive is an elderly and pious widow, Dame Oisille, who has lost in the confusion her gentleman-in-waiting named Simontault, once the *très affectueux serviteur* of Madame Parlamente, a spirited but pious woman of the world, "never lazy nor melancholy," who has also taken refuge at St. Savin with her churlish husband, Hircan. She, in her turn, is surprised to meet in this place of refuge her platonic lover Dagoucin: a most devoted admirer "who would rather die than do aught to hurt the conscience of his lady." Dagoucin has escaped from the floods with his friend Saffredant, a brilliant young scapegrace, wild and reckless, but not unloveable, who is under the charm of Longarine, a tender-hearted, timid creature, whose husband has been slain by robbers in escaping from the flood. The shadow of her sudden loss still overhangs her delicate nature. These fugitives are joined by two young unmarried ladies, Émarsuitte, a quiet, somewhat jealous-tempered

young woman, with a turn for sentiment ("Ah, Sire, you know not what a heartbreak comes from unrequited love!"), and Nomerfide, a scatter-brained high-spirited girl, "the youngest and maddest of us all." Nor is the number yet complete. Two bachelors, Guébron, a worthy, steady gentleman, and the missing Simontault, a proficient in badinage ("who is always complaining of the ladies, though he looks so merry and in such good condition"), have escaped with difficulty from the swollen river and reach the abbey at last, thus bringing the number of the rescued to the necessary ten.

These fugitives from the floods, being safely arrived at St. Savin, consider how they shall pass their time. They must wait there about a fortnight while the bridges are repaired and the waters subside. To live a fortnight without pastime is an insupportable idea. To lament their dead friends and perished servants would be a waste of time. Ought they not rather, "in joy inestimable, to praise the Creator who, contenting Himself with the servitors, has saved the masters and the mistresses?" The mere loss of servants (as Émarsuitte remarks, with a lingering touch of mediævalism), the death of servants should not throw one into despair: they are so easily replaced. Longarine, the tender-hearted, is a little shocked at this philosophy; but she too admits that a pastime is necessary, "else, remembering our losses, we might become wearisome, and that is an incurable malady." As for the madcap Nomerfide, she declares that, were she a single day without amusement, she would be found dead in the morning. To avert so doleful a catastrophe, Hircan and all the gentlemen beseech Madame Oisille, as the eldest of the party, to discover

some pastime which, without hurting the soul, may be pleasing to the body.

In this character of Madame Oisille, it is clear that the Queen of Navarre has meant to draw her own likeness. Margaret, in 1544, was fifty-two years of age, and loved to speak of herself as older than sh was. The reader is already acquainted with her leaning towards mystical piety, and her strong sense of the necessity for reforming the Catholic Church. With all her piety she is, however, above all things a woman of the great world, indulgent to the laxities of others, though more severe towards herself. It is true that Oisille is a widow, Margaret a wife and a mother. But, alone in her Castle of Alençon, with her young husband so long away in the South, with her only child so seldom seen, bred and reared so far from her care, Margaret may well have portrayed herself as one who has outlived the dearest interests of life. Her customary dress of sober black, with the short mantle fastened by pins in front, with the white chemisette gathered high at the throat, and the low French hood covering the hair, is more like mourning garb than royal splendour. A widow's dress is her most natural disguise.

Madame Oisille is a virtuous widow of good birth ; she is old and full of experience ; herself all piety and virtue, and even an adherent of the severe and scriptural religion of Geneva, she is none the less disposed to the conventional gallantry of the time. The stories of her companions sometimes draw from her a mild remonstrance, but she never forbids their recital. She possesses, indeed, quite a singular talent for drawing a pious conclusion from the loosest adventure. As all examples of human frailty go to prove that virtue and

strength should be sought in heaven and not on earth, Oisille discovers an occasion for piety in Boccaccio. And sometimes the use she makes of her scriptural knowledge is very strange indeed. A story of loveless, faithless marriage suggests the conclusion that "St. Paul wills not for married people to love each other much; for if our hearts be bound by an earthly affection, we are so much the farther from grace." And in another adventure, where a good wife laughs at her husband's infidelity, Oisille remarks: "She was not one of those against whom our Saviour speaks, saying, We have mourned and ye have not wept, we have piped and ye did not dance; for when her husband was sick she wept, and when he was merry she laughed. So all good women should share in their husband's good and evil, joy or sorrow; and serve him as the Church serves Jesus Christ." This quotation, as a quotation, might be taken as a caustic piece of sarcasm; but the peculiarity of the *Heptameron* is its union of an ideal of chivalry, honour, and religion, with an entire absence of the moral sense. Piety is an affair of the thoughts, the opinions, the ideas; possibly a matter for one's own personal life and soul. That it should attempt to regulate the lives of others would be to fall into the deadly sin of pride. Mystical as Margaret ever is, she is naturally lenient to the grosser sins; for all her esoteric dogmas go to prove, firstly, that the sins of the body are of small account compared with sins of the soul, such as pride and deadness of spirit; and secondly, that the soul exists only in its relations to the idea of God, and that it has no duties and no relations to the external world. The militant and responsible side of virtue is dead in such a soul.

Of the subjective, idealist, romantic side of virtue,

the *Heptameron* affords many an example, oddly twisted through a tangle of worldliness, gallantry, and gross indecency. Oisille always ranges herself on the side of constancy and chivalry against Hircan and Saffredant, who are supporters of the loose old adage that—

"Nous sommes faits, beaux fils, sans doute
Toutes pour tous, et tous pour toutes."

She will not allow them with impunity to call a constant, chaste, unfortunate love, madness and folly. "Do you call it folly," she cries, "to love honestly in youth and then to turn that affection to the love of God?" And she reprimands the arrogant licentiousness of these gay youths; recommending to them the older-fashioned ideal of reverence and humility on the part of the lover.

In a fine passage, she defends these virtues against Hircan, who, with a sneer, declares that chastity is not only praiseworthy, it is even miraculous.

"It is no miracle," replies Oisille.

"Not," says Hircan, "to those who are already angelized."

"Nay," answers Oisille, "I do not only speak of those who by the grace of God are quite transformed in Him, but of the coarsest, rudest spirits one may see here below in the world of men; and, if you choose, you may discover those who have so set their heart and affection on finding the perfection of science, that they have not only forgotten the pleasures of the flesh, but even its necessities, even eating and drinking; for as much as the soul penetrates within the body, by so much the flesh becomes insensible. Thus it happens that those who love beautiful, honest, and virtuous women, have no grosser desire than to look on them

and to hear them speak; and those who have no experience of these delights are the carnally-minded, who, too closely wrapt in their flesh, cannot say whether they have souls or no; but when the body is subject to the spirit, it becomes insensible. And I have known a gentleman who loved his lady so unusually, that, among all his companions, he alone was able to hold a lighted candle in his naked fingers, looking at his lady, until the flame burned him to the bone; even, he said that it did not hurt him at all."

She is the champion, not only of ideal love, but of the sentiment of pity, of consideration for the poor. More than once her stories turn on virtue that shines the brighter in a humble setting. For, she declares—

"The graces of God are not given to men for their noble birth, neither for their riches, but as it pleases His mercy; for He is no respecter of persons, He elects whom He will; and His elect honour Him with virtue and crown Him with glory. And often He elects the lowly of the earth, to the confusion of those whom the world holds in honour; for He saith: Let us not rejoice in our own righteousness, but rather that our names are written in the Book of Life."

So much for the ideal of the *Heptameron*. Yet, let us add, there is one hero, one living, earthly hero, who embodies all Oisille's conceptions of chivalry, of courage, justice and mercy. To this Avatar of honour almost every page refers. The gaiety and brilliance of his youth, the splendour of his court, his magnanimity, his courage, are constantly recorded; his amours and their adventures are fit themes for the pious Oisille and the virtuous Parlamente; his address and royal qualities are perpetually praised. It is King Francis

who is not only the occasion, but the hero of the *Heptameron.*

Oisille in particular has so great an admiration for this prince, that she finds noble in him the very acts she would have blamed with biting wit in Saffredant. With not a word does she condemn the wildest of his adventures. That he should betray his host, and unwittingly persuade a pious friar to forward an illicit love affair, all this is but a proof of his *savoir faire.* She immensely admires the piety that prompts him to say his prayers in church, on his return from an intrigue with the wife of his friend. She, the patroness of ideal goodness, cannot find any praise for an honest young girl who refuses the illegal love of the King. It is the impudence and not the virtue of such a refusal that amazes her. In her book, as in her life, Margaret's idolatry for her brother paralyses her judgment and her conscience.

But, though she cannot judge him, Margaret would fain persuade him. She is too timid, too submissive to reproach him for the tremendous guilt of the Vaudois massacres. She knows that women are smothered, brave men foully murdered, for holding opinions no more heretical than her own. And, though here and there she intercedes for some special victim, she dares not judge, she dares not condemn, she dares not rush in and stay the ruining arm of the King. But, with the timid fawning of a hound upon its angry master, she tries to reconcile him to her belief again. Timorously she plucks at his sleeve, she reminds him that this faith he punishes is her own. Even as he strikes and slays, she tells him her simple tale, and trusts that he will catch the moral. It is all the interference that she dares.

So throughout this *Heptameron* of hers, which aims above all things at beguiling the melancholy of Francis, we take note of a secondary aim, a purpose little less urgent. It is to point out the corruption of the Church; the immorality of the convents and monasteries; the impudent debauchery of the secular confessors; the low ignorant baseness of the wandering Franciscan friars. She tries to show how from the scriptures alone, and not from the dogmas of a Church intent on temporal power, should the spiritual rules of the Christian life be framed. She shows the inadequate repentance of those who buy a mass to condone a crime. Thoughts before deeds, souls before bodies, faith before works, this is her constant lesson, coming strangely enough from her frank and Gallic mouth. And again and again, explicitly and by implication, she distinguishes the purer thoughts, the cleaner lives of those who have left all to follow these doctrines. And who are they? She will not answer that. Let the King think a moment. They are Lefèbvre the dispossessed; Roussel, Farel, Calvin the exiled; Berquin, Le Court, and all the host of those who have gone up to heaven in a chariot of fire. They are the poor Vaudois, who are dying by scores and by hundreds at the King's command!

This is her second aim: to scathe and expose, to soften and persuade. And after every bitter phrase, every flash of irony, we can imagine the pause, the anxious thought; will the King be the headsman of such bidders as these? But, alas! as is naturally the fate of a lesson so subtly, so indirectly conveyed, Francis laughed at the fable, and did not heed the moral. Oisille is an excellent mistress of the ceremonies; it is a pity, adds the Court, that she is taken with these

new ideas. And Francis laughs, and says: "She loves me too well to adopt a religion that would prejudice my estate!"

With no better success than this, Madame Oisille also preaches to her companions. She induces them to read the Bible; they will do anything to gratify so charming a lady. So before dinner they study the scriptures at her side. After dinner, not to be outdone in complaisance, Oisille listens to their Boccaccian stories. And she listens without shame and without regret. She and her listeners are equally ignorant that their novels leave anything to be desired. For Madame Oisille, with her chivalric ideal, is no more fastidious than they.

But we have made too long a digression from the *Heptameron* itself. Hircan and his friends desiring, as I have told, that Madame Oisille should find them a suitable pastime, Oisille replies in a speech of real beauty:—

"My children, this is a difficult thing that you ask of me, to teach you a pastime that can deliver you from your troubles; for, having sought such a remedy all my life, I have never found but one. And this is the reading of the Holy Scriptures, in which is found the true and perfect joy of the spirit; and from which proceed health and rest for the flesh. And if you ask me to tell you the receipt which keeps me so joyous and so healthy in my age, it is that as soon as I arise in the morning I take the Holy Scriptures and read therein, seeing and contemplating the Will of God, who sent His Son for our sake into the world to announce His Holy Word and glad tidings, whereby He promises remission from our sins and the full discharge of all our debts, by the gift of His love, His

passion, and His martyrdom. The thought of this so fills me with delight, that I take up my Psalter, and, as humbly as I can, I sing in my heart and say with my mouth the beautiful canticles and psalms which the Spirit of God composed in the heart of David, and of other writers. And the contentment that I find therein so eases me, that all the evils which my days may bring appear to me as benedictions; seeing that in faith I keep in my heart even Him who hath borne them all for me. Likewise, before supper time, I retire and pasture my soul in some holy lesson; and then, at night, I recollect my doings of the day, and ask forgiveness for my faults, and praise God for His mercies. And in His love and fear and peace, I take my rest assured against all evils. There, my children, you behold the pastime which, for long enough, has sufficed me, who, having questioned all things, have found in none of them contentment for the spirit. Haply, if every morning you would read the Scriptures for an hour, and afterwards say your prayers devoutly during Mass, you would find in this desert the beauty which is in every place; for he who knows God, sees all things fair in Him; and, afar from Him, there is but ugliness."

But this proposal fills Hircan and the others with dismay. Imagine Nomerfide, who would die without a pastime, and Longarine, who is afraid to sorrow for her husband, lest she should ruin her manners; imagine the dashing Saffredant, the cynical Hircan, the sentimental Simontault, giving a fortnight to devout meditation! Hircan ventures to remonstrate. He bids us remember that they are not yet so mortified but that they need some amusement and corporal exercise. They are willing to study the Scriptures; but at

home, the men have hunting and hawking, the ladies their household, their embroidery and music; both have dances and honest amusements, "which make us forget a thousand foolish thoughts." In addition to devotion, they must have something which shall take the place of all this. It is then that Parlamente, who takes a sort of second lead in ruling the little society, suggests that they shall imitate the novels of Boccaccio. And a sort of compromise is finally adopted, by which the ladies and gentlemen agree to spend their forenoons in prayer, and their afternoons in pastime.

We can easily imagine that fair and gallant company, mustering in the pleasant warmth of the autumn noonday, along the road that leads from the convent to the pleasant meadow where they hold their sessions. Madame Oisille, all in white and sober black, stands out conspicuously from the knot of gaily-blended colours. Her dress we may fancy to be the same that the Queen of Navarre wears in the illustrations to La Coche. The others are clad after the pattern of the sisters and brothers of the Abbey of Thelema. The men wear close beards and moustaches, their hair clipped very short, and covered with a small low cap of black velvet, from which, towards the front, a white plume of Marabout feathers starts. Their long stockings are white or black, crimson or scarlet; their slashed trunk hose are of the same colours or of a varying and harmonious shade. They wear slashed and embroidered pourpoints, in cloth of gold or silver, damask, satin or velvet; their short cloaks are richly furred and guarded. At his side each man carries a handsome sword, with a gilded hilt and a sheath the same colour as his hose.

The ladies are yet more magnificent. Orange,

tawny, blue, ash-grey, yellow, white, or crimson, are their colours; velvet or silver taffeta embroidered is their favourite wear. Their skirts are distended to the shape of an inverted funnel. Their stockings are scarlet or flame-colour; their slashed shoes of crimson and violet velvet. They have mantles of taffeta furred with martin, lynx, or genet. On their heads they wear low French hoods, small caps edged with goldsmith's work, or gold nets with pearls at the angles. A gold chain hangs from the girdle; pomanders and scent-bottles, seals and keys dangle from it; and every lady has a feather fan, after the pattern of Queen Leonor's, with a little mirror at the back. They walk slowly, for the ladies have high pattens or choppines to keep their velvet shoes from the dust; you cannot see their faces, for they all wear little silken masks to shield their complexions from the noon; their hands are hidden in rich embroidered gloves. Thus, secured from cold of the wind or scorch of the sun, they walk along towards the fair green meadow.

If one should peer too close, perhaps those splendid, coloured garments would be seen to be stained with dust or rain, to be frayed with travel. If one should look too curiously, one might see many a speck in the courtesy and honour of the men, in the lovableness and spirit of the women. Yet from afar they look a happy and a pleasant company. We would fain know more of them. Oisille we know; we knew her when she was young; we have sympathised with her in good and evil fortune. But who are these, her fair and brilliant companions? M. Génin would believe them the ladies and gentlemen in waiting at the magnanimous and cultured little court of Nérac. But, if so, we only know the portraits; the originals are dead

and forgotten; the dust of oblivion is piled thick upon them. I had hoped to discover here that courtly society whom Margaret mentions in her preface, those first would-be writers of the French Decameron. But, even to suit so delightful a theory, I could not identify the rude, harsh, savage, yet half-servile Hircan, with the musical, cultured, romantic Dauphin Henry, clad always in the colours of his fair incarnate moon, and passing his leisure in reading *Amadis*. How is it possible that in the brilliant, quick, active Parlamente one should recognize Catherine dei Medici, plump, thick-set, bourgeoise, with her conciliatory manners and servile grace? No; such a theory would cost too dear. To maintain it one must rival that restorer of the Apollo Belvidere, who, having made his pair of feet too small, scraped the ankles of the statue until they were slender enough to fit. It is best to throw aside such ready-made restorations. And then a sudden fancy shot across my mind. True, Madame Oisille is Margaret of Navarre. But yet (is it not possible?), as she sits in her gloomy room at Argentan, the room where she had often been unhappy in the good old days when she was so young—as she sways in her litter along the straight, dusty, poplar-bordered and familiar roads of Alençon, thinking how she shall make this book that is to charm her brother—may not a sudden vision of the old past years rise up before her eyes, may not the contrast strike sharply on her? Then, half in regret and half in pitiful memory, may she not place beside this stately figure of herself grown old, the slimmer, swifter, brighter figure of Margaret d'Alençon, and marry this pious, worldly, brilliant Parlamente to Hircan, the moody and churlish Duke Charles? Then by their side we can imagine to

arise the tender, loving, gentle vision of Philiberta of Savoy, and we behold the sweet and timid Longarine. With M. Franck, I should give Saffredant to Bonnivet. Many another, whom we knew not, comes back to mind again, and takes a place in her story. Lastly she creates "le gentilhomme Simontault," obviously not quite the equal in rank of his associates, who once, long ago, was Parlamente's *très affectueux serviteur*. And in this neat, merry, half-sentimental fellow, "a little sore at his jester's reputation," we fancy that we see again the well-remembered form of Clément Marot, of whose early death Queen Margaret must have heard in that very autumn of 1544.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE HEPTAMERON.—II.

I HAVE not yet noticed the claim of Charles Nodier to give the *Heptameron* to Bonaventure Desperriers. For, indeed, I believe this claim has very few supporters, and that it would be impossible to prove its justice. On the other side, on the side of Margaret, is ranked all past tradition, all modern authority. Brantôme, whose grandmother held the ink-horn for the Queen; Claude Gruget, who copied the unfinished text and gave the *Heptameron*, written for the Court, to the world at large; and in modern days Michelet Génin, the bibliophile Jacob, Monsieur Roux de Lincy, with all Margaret's historians and editors, affirm the book to be written by her hand. Miss Freer, to whom Margaret's *Heptameron* appears

> The first fleck's fall on her wonder of white,

would gladly accept the theory of Nodier; but, with the best will in the world, she cannot be convinced. Indeed, he has a hard case to prove. Desperriers left so very little authentic work behind him that the

argument of similarity of style goes for almost nothing. We know less of Desperrier's style than of Margaret's, and the style of the *Heptameron* is a woman's style. We have absolutely no direct evidence that Desperriers had any share in the book. He was a *valet de chambre* to the Queen of Navarre; but so were most of the men of letters of his age. The untrustworthy testimony of the Abbé Goujet, who relates that Bonaventure Desperriers helped the Queen in her novels *and her poems,* is all that Nodier can find to support him. He is too shrewd to believe that Desperriers, an avowed atheist, and of a fanatic scepticism, had a hand in the mystical rhodomontade of *Les Marguerites de la Marguerite.* But he is, in truth, scarcely better justified in attributing the *Heptameron* to an unbeliever. The bursts of Lutheran eloquence, the tendency to round off all discussion with a text, the tone of somewhat unctuous, mystical piety—all these are eminently characteristic of Margaret. They could scarcely be considered likely attributes of "*le joyeux Bonaventure.*"

Dismissing, then, this theory of Nodier's, let us consider the merits of the *Heptameron* itself. To-day it is scarcely a work that one would choose to read from end to end for pleasure. This is not only on account of its grossness, for it is infinitely less indecent than many works of the Sixteenth Century which are certainly well read at present. Putting aside such writers as Brantôme, Rabelais, or Bandello, it is less coarse than much of Shakespeare. But, on reading this book, one becomes poignantly aware that it falls short, not only of our standard of decency, but of our idea of pathos, of humour, of interest. There is none of the genius which sees the human being and not the apparel; none of the passion, the poetry, the wide and

human wisdom, which have saved greater writers for the pleasures of an altered age. Its virtues, as well as its faults, are merely of the time, and not particular, and it is well that the *Heptameron* should be merely the delight of students and the treasure of antiquarians.

There is, to begin with, but one truly pathetic situation in the book. It is in the second novel, where the Queen's muleteer, returning from Amboise, sees, stretched across the doorway of his house, a bier, with the white-covered corpse of the wife whom he left well and safe two days ago, and who has been foully outraged, since then, and murdered. Singularly little is made of this poignant moment. What interested Margaret and her courtly readers is no longer interesting to the taste of to-day, at once much simpler and far more subtle. Yet, not to be unfair to a very famous book, I have translated two extremely characteristic stories; and, as the conversations in between the novels are by far the liveliest and most vigorous part of the *Heptameron*, I have chosen two that follow each other.

Novel LXIV.

A gentleman, disdained in marriage, enters a monastery, wherefore his lady does as much for him.

In the town of Valencia there lived a gentleman who, during five or six years, had loved a lady so perfectly that neither of them was hurt in honour nor in conscience thereby; for his intention was to make her his wife—and reasonably enough, as he was handsome, rich, and of a noble house, and he had not placed himself at her service without first making known

his desire to arrange a marriage with the good will of her friends; and these, being assembled for that purpose, found the match in every way fitting, if the girl herself should be of their mind. But she, either hoping to find a better, or wishing to hide the love she had for the youth, discovered an obstacle; so the company was broken up, not without regretting that she could not give the affair a better ending, seeing that on both sides the match was good. But, above all assembled, the poor gentleman was wroth, who could have borne his misfortune patiently had he believed the fault to lie with her friends and not with her; but, knowing the truth (to believe which was more bitter than death), he returned home, without a word to his lady-love or to any other there; and, having put some order in his affairs, he went away into a desolate place, where he sought with pains and trouble to forget this affection, and to turn it wholly to the love of Our Saviour Jesus Christ, to which affection he was, without comparison, the more obliged. And during this time he never heard either from his lady or from her friends; therefore he resolved, having failed in the happiest life he could have hoped, to take and choose the most austere and disagreeable; and, full of this sad thought, which one might call despair, he went to become a monk at a Franciscan monastery, close to which lived several of his friends. These, having heard of his despair, made every effort to hinder his resolve; but so firmly was it rooted in his heart, they could not turn him from it. Nevertheless, knowing his ailment, they thought to find the medicine, and went to her who was the cause of his sudden devotion, finding her much bewildered and astonished at their news, for she had meant her refusal, which was but for a time, to

test the true love of her lover, and not to lose it for ever; and, seeing the evident danger of this, she sent him an epistle, which, rudely rendered, runs as follows:—

"Because, unless it well be proven, Love
For strong and loyal no one can approve,
I wished to wait till proven to my mind
Was that I longed so ardently to find.
A husband full of perfect love it was
That I desired, a love that would not pass;
And so I begged my parents not to haste,
Still to delay, let one year, two years, waste
Before I played the game that must endure
Till death, which many a one repents, for sure.
I never said I would not have your love;
So great a loss I was not dreaming of,
For, certes, none but you I loved at all—
None other would I lord and husband call.
Ah me! my love; what bitterness to say,
That thou without a word art gone away!
A narrow cell, a convent life austere—
These are your choice; O misery to hear!
Now must I change my office, pleading so,
As once in guileless words you used to do—
Requiring that which was of me required,
Acquiring him by whom I was acquired.
Nay, now, my love, life of the life of me,
I do not care to live bereft of thee.
Ah! turn again thy distant eyes to mine;
Turn on thy steps, if so thy will incline.
Leave thou the cowl of grey, the life austere;
All of my love and all my heart are here,
By thee so many times, so much desired.
Time hath not changed my heart—it hath not tired.
For thee, for thee alone, I keep my heart,
And that must break if thou must keep apart.
Come, then, again, return; believe thy Dear;
Consider in thy mind how many a year
We might be happy, joined in holy marriage;
And me believe, and not thy cruel courage.
Be sure I never meant to say or do
A word to wound, a deed to make thee rue.

I meant to make you happy, Dear, enough,
When I had full assurance of your love.
And now, indeed, my heart is fixed and sure;
Thy firmness, faith and patience to endure,
And, over all, thy love, I know and see,
And they have gained me wholly, Dear, to thee.
Come, now, and take the thing that is thine own,
For thine am I, and thou be mine alone."

This letter, carried by one of his friends, along with all possible remonstrances, was received by the gentleman Franciscan with a very mournful countenance, and with so many sighs and tears, it seemed as though he meant to burn or drown the poor little letter; but he made no answer to it, telling the messenger that the mortification of his extreme passion had cost him so dear that now he neither cared to live nor feared to die; wherefore he begged her who had been the occasion of his grief, since she had not chosen to content the passion of his great desires, not to torment him now that he was quit of them, but to content herself with the evil done, for which he could find no other remedy than the choice of this rude life, whose continual penance put his sorrow out of mind, and, by fasts and discipline, enfeebled his body so that the remembrance of Death had become his sovereign consolation; and, above all, he prayed her never to let him hear any news of her, for even the memory of her name had become an insupportable purgatory to him. The gentleman returned with this mournful answer, delivering it to her, who could not hear it without incredible regret. But Love, which lets not the spirit fail until it is in extremity, put it into her fancy that, if she could only see him, the sight of her and the voice of her would have more force than writing. Wherefore, accompanied by her father and the nearest

of her kin, she set out for the monastery where he dwelt, having left nothing in her tire-closet that could heighten the aspect of her beauty; and sure she felt that, if he could but see her once and hear her speak, it would be impossible that the flame, so long continued in their hearts, should not light up again, and stronger than before. Therefore, entering the monastery about the end of Vespers, she had him called to a chapel in the cloisters. He, who knew not who was asking for him, went to fight the hardest battle he had ever fought. And when she saw him, all pale and undone, so that she scarcely knew him again, yet filled none the less with a grace no less amiable than before, then Love constrained her to stretch out her arms, thinking to embrace him; but the pity of seeing him in such a state sent such a sudden weakness to her heart that she fell down fainting. Then the poor monk, who was not destitute of brotherly charity, lifted her up and sate her on a seat there was in the chapel. And he himself, who no less needed succour, made as if he felt no passion, strengthening his heart in the love of his God against the opportunity that tempted him, so that he seemed, from his countenance, to ignore that which he saw. She, coming to life again, turned on him her eyes, that were so beautiful and piteous they would have softened stone, and began to tell him all the thoughts she had to draw him from that place; to which he answered in the most virtuous manner that he could. But in the end the poor monk, feeling his heart melt before the abundant tears of his darling (as one who sees Love, the cruel archer, whose wound he has long suffered from, make ready his golden arrow to strike him in a fresh and mortal part), even so he fled away from Love and his Beloved, as

though the only force left to him lay in flight. And being shut in his chamber, not wishing to let her go without some resolution taken, he wrote to her a few words in Spanish, which I have found so excellent in substance that I have not chosen to diminish their grace by any rendering of mine; and these words he sent to her by a little novice, who found her still in the chapel, in such despair that, had it been lawful for her to take the veil in that monastery, she would have stayed. But, on seeing the writing, which said, "*Volvete don venísti, anima mi, que en las tristas vidas es la mia*," she, knowing by these words that all her hopes had failed, determined to believe the counsel of him and of her friends, and returned to her own home, to lead there as melancholy a life as her lover spent austerely in his monastery.

"Thus you see, ladies, the vengeance this gentleman took on his hard-hearted love, who, thinking to make an experiment of his truth, drove him to despair, in such a manner that, when she would, she could not have him again."

"I am sorry," said Nomerfide, "that he did not doff his cowl to go and marry her, for then, methinks, there would have been a perfect marriage."

"Of a truth," said Simontault, "I think he was very wise; for who has well considered the marriage state will not esteem it less vexatious than an austere devotion, and he, so greatly weakened by fasts and abstinences, feared to take upon him such a life-long burden."

"It seems to me," said Hircan, "she did very wrong to so weak a man in trying to tempt him with marriage: that is too much for the strongest man in

the world. But had she only spoken of love and friendship, with no other bondage than that of will, there is no cord would not have been broken nor knot untied; yet, seeing that for escape from purgatory she offered him Hell, I think he had good reason to refuse."

"I' faith," said Emarsuitte, "there are many who, intending to do better than others, do worse, or, at least, the very reverse of what they would."

"Truly," said Guebron, "you put me in mind, *à propos* of nothing, of one who did the opposite of her intention, and therefrom came a great tumult in the Church of St. John of Lyons."

"Prithee, then," said Parlamente, "take my place and tell us the tale."

"My tale," said Guebron, "will neither be so long nor so piteous as that of Parlamente."

Novel LXV.

The simplicity of an old woman, who, offering a lighted taper to St. John of Lyons, stuck it to the forehead of a soldier who lay asleep there on a sepulchre.

In the Church of St. John of Lyons there was a very dark chapel, and within it a stone sepulchre, carved in high relief with images as large as life, and all round the sepulchre the likeness of many men-at-arms lay as if asleep. A soldier, strolling one day about the church during the great heat of summer, felt drowsy with the warmth, and, looking at the dark, cool chapel, he thought he would go to the sepulchre and sleep there among the other men-at-arms; and so he lay down beside the images. Now, it happened that a good old

woman, very pious, came to the chapel as he lay fast asleep; and, after she had said her prayers, holding a candle in her hand, she meant to fix it against the sepulchre; and, finding nearest her the sleeping man, she would have stuck it to his forehead, believing him a stone image; but against this stone the wax would not hold. The good woman, thinking it was because the image was so chill, held the flame against his brow to make it warm enough for her candle to stick there; but the image, which was not insensible, began to call out; at which the woman, nearly out of her mind with fear, took to crying, "A miracle! a miracle!" and so loud that all who were in the church began to run, some to ring the bells and some to see the miracle. And the good woman led them to see the image which had moved, which gave occasion for laughter to many present; but several priests could not content themselves so easily, for they had hoped in their hearts to turn this sepulchre to good account and make money out of it.

"Look you, therefore, ladies, to what saints you give your candles."

"'Tis a great thing to know," said Hircan, "that, whatever they set about, women always must do wrong."

"Is it doing wrong," said Nomerfide, "to carry candles to a sepulchre?"

"Yes," said Hircan, "when they set fire to men's foreheads; for no good thing can call itself good when it is done badly. Fancy! the poor woman thought she was making God a fine present of her little candle!"

"God does not regard," said Oisille, "the value of

a gift, but the heart that gives it. It may be this good woman had more love for God than those who give him their great torches, for, as the Scripture says, she hath cast in of her need, even all her substance."

"Yet I will not believe," said Saffredant, "that God, Who is sovereign wisdom, can take pleasure in the foolishness of women; for, let simplicity please Him as it will, I see in the Scripture He makes no account of the ignorant; and, if He commands us to be simple as the dove, He commands no less the wisdom of the serpent."

"As for me," said Oisille, "I esteem her not ignorant who carries to God her candle or lighted taper, carrying it as one who recants her sin, kneeling on the ground, torch in hand, before her Sovereign Saviour, to Whom, confessing her damnation, she appeals in a sure hope for mercy and salvation."

"Would to God," said Dagoucin, "that everyone understood the matter as well as you! But I believe these poor simpletons have no such meaning in their deeds."

Oisille answered him, "Those who least know how to tell it are often those who feel the most the Love of God and of His Will; wherefore we should judge no one but ourself."

Emarsuitte, in laughing, added, "It is not so strange a thing to have frighted a sleeping clown; for women as low-born as she have made great princes afraid, and without setting fire to their foreheads."

"I am sure," said Dagoucin, "that you know some story you will tell us; wherefore you will take my place, if you please."

"The story will not be long," said Emarsuitte;

"but, if I can tell it as it happened, you will have no need to weep about it."

The first of these stories gives a good idea of the romantic side of the *Heptameron*; all the pathetic tales are much the same. It is impossible, to-day, to care for Florinde and Amadour: for all the various true lovers, who see each other, fall in raptures, are parted, and retire each to a separate monastery. This is Margaret's stock idea of the heartrending; and the people of the *Heptameron* cherish this ideal of pathos (as perhaps the ideal is always cherished) in defiance of the conduct of actual life. Not one of them would allow a daughter to marry for love. "You may say what you will," says Oisille; "none the less we must recognise paternal authority; for, if people married at pleasure, what unhappy marriages would there not be! Is it to be expected that a young man and a girl from twelve to fifteen years of age can understand what is really their good? And, if you consider, those who have married for love come off far worse, as a rule, than those who are married by force; for young men, not knowing what is fit for them, take the first they find, without consideration; then they discover their error, and go from bad to worse; whereas a forced marriage is generally made by those who have more judgment and experience than those whom it chiefly concerns; so that when these discover all the benefits they did not understand, they savour and embrace these with the greater affection." Thus discourses Oisille, in dialogue with her companions, thinking, no doubt, a little bitterly of the rebellious conduct of Mademoiselle d'Albret. And this is the real opinion of the whole society. But let any one of them begin on a pathetic tale, and we shall have the old puppets,

the sentimental youth, the heartbroken young lady; and the whole company will melt into tears for a suffering which, safely off the stage of the ideal, would elicit only their anger or their contempt. But we, of a later generation, listen with cheeks unwet. This artificiality grates upon us. These broken hearts are all too much alike.

When the story takes a humorous turn, new difficulties arise. Queen Margaret certainly shows more spirit and vigour in this direction; her satire is often shrewd; she has a certain enjoyment of life, of pleasure, of adventure, and even of grossness, which is at all events better than the pointless pretence of her pathos. It at least is real; and it is very characteristic of her, of her nation, and of her time. It has a certain historical value, this free, loose, reckless gaiety of hers. And though there is, intrinsically, little humour in it, there is much humour in the reader's mind who notes the odd conjunction of this Rabelaisian fancy with the mystical piety of Oisille. It gives his imagination a certain humorous shock to realise that these moods are perfectly compatible with each other.

But the real value of the *Heptameron* lies in a certain direct actuality in the description of life and of manners in such a town as Alençon or Amboise at that period. We can frame a fair idea of the relative position of classes, of the all-pervading wealth and comfort, the great amount of time given to idleness and pleasure, and also of the thousand sad incongruities which France presented then. In this sense the *Heptameron* is really interesting. We rummage among its out-dated gallantry and strangely-fashioned piety, and forgotten in the medley, we find a handful of the life of the past. We feel it in our hands, as

we had never hoped to feel it; and for its sake we pardon a multitude of sins.

A great many details, quite absurd and trivial, which the Queen merely introduced because they really happened, surprise and delight us. From the very first novel of all we seem plunged in a strange world of contrasts; a world of beautiful light-minded ladies, who spend their time in broidering red silk counterpanes, in reading *La Belle Dame sans Merci,* in devising interviews with their lovers, or in visiting the magician of the town to watch the wasting of wax effigies of those whom they would slay. Galléry was this wizard's name. It gives us a little shock to meet him in such modern and cultured society; but we find stranger flaws in this sumptuous civilisation. Torture is still used in the civic trials of Alençon, where the Duke has absolute power of life and death, like any Duke in Shakespeare's plays. Ten crowns is the proper wage for a hired assassin; and we are delighted to know the exact amount that we should pay him. Sanctuary is still given in palaces and churches; and the orthodox way to secure the ends of justice is by starving out the refugees. All this seems out of date beside the general spread of wealth and comfort. Even among the lower *bourgeoisie,* servants are to be found in every house: engaged by the quarter, not by the year as in England. There is abundance of rich tapestries; in the humblest households the beds, even of the servants, are finely curtained; and the *lit d'honneur* is large enough to hold four or five persons. It is still considered a mark of esteem to invite a distinguished guest to share the couch of the host and hostess. Yet, in other respects, there is no lack of privacy. The wives of the small burghers—of the

clerks, the shopkeepers, the advocates—have dressing-rooms and parlours. Their houses have large gardens and orchards. There is plenty of room. There is, also, plenty of money. When the clerk's son goes to woo the draper's daughter, he and his mother make a great purchase of thick silks, choosing everything they like ("for, as for money, you know how little in need of that sort of drug these shopkeepers are"). The women dress in fine taffetas, in silks, even in velvet, "which once was only worn by women of good family." There is no dearth of good cheer, of comfort, even of luxury among these people, who may, none the less, be burned for heresy or witchcraft, or racked to death if they offend the law. The chief blot on this rich diffusion of wealth is the corruption of the clergy. The confessor, if all tales be true, is a real danger in every household. The convents and monasteries offered more serious perils to innocent youth than even the thoughtless world outside. Meanwhile society went smoothly on; deriving, perhaps, some satisfaction from the shortcomings of its spiritual pastors. It was a merry world, my Masters; but corrupt at the heart all the same.

The corruption, of course, is especially in evidence in the book before us; for it was Margaret's object to expose the radical dangers of a celibate priesthood, the worldliness of a Church avowedly malcontent with merely spiritual power, and the gross ignorances which the popularity of the begging friars had introduced even into the pulpit and the confessional. Margaret had it greatly at heart to reform the Catholic Church; and of course the need of reform is emphasized in her novels. But the sense of general well-being and good humour, of life and vigour and wealth, of a rising and

influential *bourgeoisie*, these signs of prosperity are quite intrinsic, quite natural and unconsidered. Immoral, lax, irreligious as it is, this world of the *Heptameron* compares favourably enough with the world of the Italian novelists, full of wars, plague, cruelty, and unnatural vices; although infinitely less pure, it has superior points to the world of Cervantes's *Novelas*, with its violent contrasts of squalid beggars and merchants from the Indies, fabulously rich, with its gold-fever in the air, its epidemic of vagabondage, its national blight of jealousy and slavery and persecution. It is still the world of Gargantua; although at the solemn Court of the Dauphin a more decorous world is already taking shape—the orthodox world of Tartuffe.

This actuality is the true salt of the *Heptameron*. It is a document which instructs one in the life of France at that time; in the characters also of the rulers of France. Here one meets the King as he was in life: light-minded, chivalric in battle, picturesquely magnanimous to the traitor who would have murdered him, a traitor himself to the advocate who would have served him. Free-liver and free-lover as he was, free-thinker almost (worst crime of all), one sees in the *Heptameron* the dashing, effective qualities which secured to Francis the devotion of his subjects and the admiration of the world. Impetuous, impulsive, heroic at a pinch, the very qualities which made him an unsteady ruler made him a prince to adore. His reckless battles, his sudden determinations (one day for Luther, the next for the Inquisition; one day the friend of the Pope, the next of Soliman), his worship of beauty and pleasure, his public magnificence, his affable splendour, even his misfortunes, combined to give a most picturesque light and shade to his character.

One can understand his popularity in a time when patriotism merely meant devotion to the Prince, in a time when the country was content to be the property of the ruler. For the Francis of the *Heptameron* has many popular qualities: he is brave, gallant, magnanimous, and cheerful.

But if the *Heptameron* instructs one in the character of Francis, far more striking is the portrait which it gives of Margaret herself in her later youth and middle age, very different from the exquisite profile which Michelet has etched for us, though this is true enough, no doubt, of the Margaret of Meaux. We must none the less accept this later likeness, for the artist painted herself. No delicate profile this: a full face, laughing, with shrewd humorous lips, and the great nose of Francis, grown coarser than in her girlish days. A face that has experienced many aspects of life and fortune, and has learned a tolerant clearsightedness for their pretensions. No mystic's face now, with faint, undecided features; yet with a certain wistful and religious spirit in the eyes and in the smile, making her still hope to find in Heaven the virtue she so good-humouredly misses from the earth.

In the eleventh novel of the *Heptameron* Margaret relates, under altered names, her adventure at the hunting-lodge of Bonnivet. She introduces herself: "A lady of so good a family that there could be no better; a widow, living with her brother who loved her dearly, who was himself a great lord and husband of a daughter of the King. This young Prince was greatly subject to his desires, loving the chace, pastimes, and dances, as youth requires; and he had a very tiresome wife (the poor, holy, neglected, consumptive Claude) whom his pastimes did not please at

all. Wherefore this Prince always took about with his wife his sister, who was of a joyous life, and was the best company possible, though at the same time a good woman and respectable . . . a gay and pious lady, loving to laugh, though a princess and truly chaste. A widow, young, *en bon point*, and of a very good constitution . . . very strong . . . young and beautiful, living joyously in all society . . . so amiable to her admirers that she cannot complain of their insults lest she should be supposed to have encouraged them . . . Yet she goes with her head in the air, knowing the surety of her honour . . . many women (who lead a far austerer life than she) have not her virtue . . ."

All through the *Heptameron* the same traits recur: the light-heartedness and free manners, the real virtue, the good-nature and worldliness. Sometimes, it is true, this great lady is spoken of as frequenting religious houses, and she is always awake to the existence of a more spiritual life than her own. But, above all things, she is "*forte, de bonne complexion, de joyeuse vie.*"

This robustness of temper, this love of life, of health, strength, joy, splendour, this absorbing delight in physical and material details, is perhaps of all attributes the most exclusively Gallic. Rabelais and Balzac exemplify it in the highest degree; it is the especial flavour and quality of France. Margaret possessed it, singularly blended with a sincere but vague mysticism. And this robust naturalness is the foundation of her whole character. All natural virtues are hers: she is kindly, affectionate, impulsively generous, and compassionate. For herself she fears suffering, so she would not let another suffer; yet, as she herself would die in torture for Francis, so, if necessary, she would exact from others a like sacri-

fice for him. Of abstract justice she has no ideal; neither of other abstract qualities—honour, decency, morality—virtues that have been invented for the greater safety of the race. For all her mysticism, she has little sympathy with unembodied ideas.

It is not that she is less virtuous than her neighbours; but her virtue takes a different turn. She and the Spaniards, whose influence is spreading far and wide, take their stand on different moralities. They stab their unfaithful wives and burn their heretics in gangs. To Margaret infidelity is tolerable, but not fanaticism; murder, and not loose morals, excites her horror. Her respect for life is stronger than her respect for any moral code.

And, with all its limitations, this gift of actuality was the one most needed by the age in which she lived. Born prematurely in the Dauphin's Court, the seventeenth century was drawing on apace; the seventeenth century, with its moonstruck romance, its genius for mathematics, its conflict of science and superstition, its perversities of torture and fanaticism. Loyola is already the General of the new Society of Jesus. The Guises are already grown. Already, at the Court of the King, sits, white and black as a moon in the clouds, the relentless beauty of Diana; Diana, panoplied in her incestuous respectability; Diana the would-be disinheritor of her Huguenot children; Diana to whom form is all and nature nothing. Already, under her fair, white bosom, throbs the unnatural pulse of the age to come.

CHAPTER XV.

(1544–1545.)

DOWNFALL.

No sooner were the overtures to peace begun than Martin de Guzman, the Emperor's confessor, and the King's mistress, Madame d'Étampes, met to discuss between themselves the provisions of the treaty. Each was eager to secure a personal advantage from it: De Guzman, the glory of a triumph over heresy, and Madame d'Étampes a place of shelter when the King should be no more. For many a weary month the pretty, cowardly, distracted Duchess had revolved her plans, and found no safety from the wrath to come, when Henry and Diana should reign. Bitterly she remembered the years of insults that she had heaped on "La Vieille," as she had nick-named the Dauphin's beautiful goddess, and she remembered her open antagonism to the victorious Emperor. And, even now, she could not stay her bitter tongue. Day after day added some new revilement to the list. For she could not bring herself to repent. And since she would not amend, she must endeavour to escape.

Anne de Pisseleu was a Huguenot in politics, and it was believed that she shared the New Ideas; but

when De Guzman demanded the suppression of heresy, we do not hear that she made any opposition. On her side she demanded: a court out of France and a princely revenue for her young champion the Duke of Orleans; a place for her to fly to and live in safety and brilliance when Francis should be dead. Let De Guzman settle this with his master, and she would answer for the scourging of the heretics.

Then each of these honourable negotiators went to his work; the monk to his Imperial penitent, the pretty Duchess to her King. Each carried the point, for each had bargained for a thing his master specially desired. The heretics were as odious to the Most Christian Charles as to the Dominican himself. Not many years were to elapse before the Emperor should take the cowl; and the monkish temper was already strong in him. Moreover, not only from motives of faith, but for reasons of policy he wished to subdue the Lutherans. Since the Treaty of Smalkald in 1530 the Protestants of Germany had grown too strong. Anxious to avert an open rebellion, Charles had granted the Treaty of Nuremburg, allowing liberty of conscience to the Lutherans; and the remembrance of this concession was a thorn in his flesh. Since then, also, the Protestants had gained in strength; they would be hard subjects to master. Yet, till he had them at his feet, Charles could not be absolutely sure of his tenure. The league of Lutheran cities was strong. It included Constance, Nuremburg, Ulm, Strasburg, and Heilbronn, with eight other rich Imperial towns, backed by the states of Saxony, Hesse, Brandenburg, Anhalt, and the two Luneburgs. Charles, ever long-sighted and keen, trembled lest the Kings of France and England should join this Protestant

Confederation. Henry VIII. had already shaken off the yoke of the Church. Francis was already too well with the Lutherans; constantly irritated by the Sorbonne, constantly influenced by his semi-Lutheran sister, it was possible that he might dare the wrath of the Church and of the Empire to make the head of a league which should include both the Protestants and Soliman.

Fatally blind to the larger interests of his kingdom, Francis, too, saw cause for gratulation in the peace. Firstly, it secured the Milanese, or, at worst, the Netherlands. The treaty also rid the kingdom of two powerful armies drawn up within a few leagues of Paris. However confident the Dauphin might be in his successful generalship, Francis knew very well that Paris had hitherto been saved, not by the Dauphin, but by the disunion between the Emperor and Henry VIII. The treaty would free his kingdom of their dangerous conjunction; and it would bring many advantages to the court; a glorious provision for young Charles, a surcease from trouble to the King, whose wife lay in a nervous fever while her brother made war on her husband. Her dangerous illness had touched her kind-hearted though unfaithful consort; he could not but remember how much he owed this nervous and saddened woman. Anne de Pisseleu, who was not so patient under disappointment, would be satisfied. And what, after all, would Francis resign? His word of honour, his influence in Europe, his independence, and the glory of his people. But none of these things can be seen or weighed; none of them can be kept without continual struggle. Francis was old and tired. He found peace and plenty preferable to them all.

So, on the 18th of September 1544, Charles and Francis met at Crépy in Laonnois, Madame d'Étampes and Martin de Guzman, doubtless, among the attendant company. Between the King and the Emperor lay the treaty, yet unsigned. By its provisions the Emperor ceded to the young Duke of Orleans, at the expiration of two years, either his daughter Mary with the Netherlands, or Anne, his niece, dowered with the Milanese. The King, on his side, promised to bestow upon his second son a yearly revenue of a hundred thousand livres, secured on Bourbon, Orleans, Angoulême, and Chatellerault. In case these duchies did not yield the sum desired, that of Alençon should be taken from the much-enduring Margaret and added to the list. All mutual conquests since the Treaty of Nice were to be restored. It was further provided that the King should renounce his alliance with Soliman II., and withdraw his protection from the Protestant princes of Germany; and that he should undertake *to subdue the power of the Turks, and arrest the progress of Heresy.* So ran the treaty, with its promises of gold and treason. The King and the Emperor read it through. First one signed it, then the other.

From that moment the influence of Spain was paramount in Europe; France was no longer a rival. From that moment the Inquisition triumphed; that treaty authorized the Vaudois massacres, and decided the doom of the twelve hundred Huguenot gentlemen of Amboise; the knife was ground then that should serve to stab Coligny, and the signal given for the slaughter of Saint Bartholomew. And, at the same time, the political influence of France was destroyed. She was made to ruin herself in the eyes of her natural allies. In reducing France to the condition of an

Imperial province, Charles could afford to promise the King a governorship for his younger son.

So the short war ended in far more perilous amity. All celebrated the occasion with rejoicings: Francis, Leonor, the young Duke, even Margaret herself, Margaret the champion of the oppressed. In a long poem to her brother, she entreats him not to forget, in suppressing heresy, to reform the Church. She sings a pæan, strange in her mouth, over the triumph of the Holy Church, and the reunion of Charles and Francis. No words are rich enough to express her rapture: "All other good or gain, compared to this, appears imperfect." And she concludes: "This peace is of God, we are very sure." Little did Margaret divine over what graves she was chanting her hymns of victory.

The Dauphin alone was angry and suspicious. His vanity as a general, his jealousy of his brother, were cruelly stung by this treaty, which closed a fortunate campaign with an ignoble truce, and gave the gain of the war to the Duke of Orleans, and all the loss to France. Gathering his nobles round him at Fontainebleau, he signed a solemn act of protest, witnessed by the Count of Anguien and the Duke of Guise. Though no high motives illumined him, at least he saw the iniquity of this treaty, and did his utmost to prevent it. But there was no one to listen to him. The King was hunting at Romorantin. The Queen of Navarre was writing stories in her castle at Alençon.

Very soon the treaty began to bear its natural fruit; this treaty which Margaret praised in prose and verse; this pact of treason and derogation which she declared should give peace, "not to us alone, but to all Christendom." Whom the gods doom, first they madden.

Surely some lunacy of vain belief infected France that day when she signed away her independence among such rejoicings; surely some craze had filmed the brain of the tolerant Queen of Navarre, when, laying will and conscience and judgment at her brother's feet, she praised the infamy which doomed so many innocent to death.

The peace was signed on the 18th of September. No sooner was the King pledged to the cause of the Inquisition than Cardinal de Tournon began to supplicate him to exterminate the Vaudois from his kingdom, and by the 1st of January the King was convinced.

Who were these Vaudois—this tiny people, springing from Lyons in the twelfth century, and settled among the valleys of the Alps of Piedmont—this scanty, timid herd of mountain folk, for whose destruction the Inquisition was invented? They were, indeed, a remnant, pursued with fire and sword from their earliest days; burned alive in the twelfth century; hacked to death in the thirteenth; suffocated by hundreds under Francis I.; roasted slowly, tortured, hurled like stones down the mountains, slaughtered in every diabolic fashion through the whole diabolic seventeenth century; yet still surviving, unobtrusive and gentle as ever, with their simple faith and their plain, humble worship, unexterminated by the cruelty of ages.

One Peter de Waldo, a merchant of Lyons, is said to be the ancestor of their faith. Before his death, in 1170, this man, one of the numerous reformers who preceded the Reformation, had impressed the people of Lyons with his pure and noble faith. After his death the sect flourished, and in the thirteenth century it was

found necessary to invent the Inquisition to destroy it. In his *History of Popular Pantheism*, M. Auguste Jundt has printed a singular account of the Vaudois left by Étienne de Belleville, a Dominican, who had charge of this Inquisition of 1233.

"They absolutely refuse," the Inquisitor relates, "to obey the Roman Church, which they call the impure Babylon of the Apocalypse. For them, all good men are priests, having received from God the ordination which ecclesiastics receive from men. They teach that it is sufficient to confess to God, and that God alone has the right to excommunicate."

Splendid and difficult saying! Often enough must the innocent and persecuted Vaudois have laid this precept, in sore extremity, to heart! "God alone has the right to excommunicate."

"And," proceeds De Belleville, "they believe not in prayers for the dead, since for them Purgatory is only in this life."

Ah! Étienne de Belleville, worthy Inquisitor, do you believe that any dogma could declare more crucial sufferings to purify a tainted soul than those with which you visited these Vaudois on earth? What else to them, indeed, did you make their life but one long Purgatory, one perpetual fear and horror, one lasting torment?

"For them Purgatory is in this world alone. They reject alike oaths and lies. They deny the right to execute justice or to make war, except on evil spirits. They allow meat on fast days and work on Saints' days; for, according to them, there are no other Saints than good men and women, here on earth. Likewise, they hold it for a sin to adore the cross or the body of Christ, or to pay Peter's pence; they call rich priests

the children of the Devil, and refuse to consider the church or the churchyard a holier place than other ground, for they say the whole earth is equally blessed of God. They mock the singing of hymns and the tapers burning before the holy images; and the days when churches and altars are consecrated they call, in derision, 'the Holy Days of Stones.'

"Every good and holy man, they say, is the son of God, even as Christ Himself. They acknowledge the Incarnation, Nativity, Passion, and Resurrection of Christ; but by this they understand the conception, birth, and spiritual resurrection of the man made perfect through penitence. For them the true Passion of Jesus is the martyrdom of the just, and the veritable Sacrament is the conversion of man, for in that manner is made the Body of Christ.

"Nevertheless, they differ much among themselves, according as they be more or less attainted by these errors. Nearly all agree that the soul of every good man is the Holy Spirit, that is to say, God. But there are some among them of less evil sentiments, whose error is that every worthy man can make the Body of Christ in the Eucharist in pronouncing the words prescribed. I have seen one such heretic in the flames, who, placed before the altar, believed herself able to consecrate the bread and wine, and she a woman. I have heard a mother and daughter, attainted with these same errors, although not of one mind on certain points, make proof of a profound knowledge of the propositions they defended. Both of them were burned."

It will be seen that these persecuted Vaudois had much in common with the modern sect of Quakers. Like their younger and more fortunate brethren, they

would not swear and would not lie. War was no less to them than murder. They believed in no hierarchy, but only in the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. And for holding these tenets they were slaughtered and tormented throughout five centuries.

Like the Quakers, the Vaudois were a quiet, even a timid people. They did not seek the notice or the glory of the world. The life they loved the best was that of their lonely Alpine valleys, the simple days of shepherding among the fairy-haunted hills, the evenings when the head of every house read, in his own dialect, the Bible to his assembled children; the bursting of the flowers in spring (flowers which the Fantines, the Vaudois fairies, watch and water every day until they blow); the long days out on the hills in summer, when the cattle are led to the upper meadows; the cheerful harvest, when all work together, fathers, sons, daughters, and mothers, and the mother sets her baby's cradle among the standing corn for the fairies to guard during her absence, for the fairies to rock and sing to sleep, and to brush the flies from his forehead with their gauzy wings; lastly, the bitter winter, when the whole household sit in the stables for warmth, while the father reads the psalms and the women sing songs of elves and fairies.

They are still left, some of the Vaudois fairy-songs. Innocent, charming little ballads, as simple as nursery-rhymes, it is strange to find them, so sweet and harmless, among the gaunt and horrible memories of crime, slaughter, and agony, with which the Inquisition has seared the pleasant Vaudois meadows. They are more touching than any tale of martyrdom, these happy, childish little songs, which sprang up so sweetly in the gentle Vaudois hearts. Two of them shall stand

here, and remind us of the life these quiet people led in their interval of quiet before the early spring of 1545.

For many years there had been peace. True, that in 1540 the Cardinal de Tournon had secured a writ condemning the head of every household to flame and sword; but before the fearful execution had been carried out, the good William du Bellay had obtained a reprieve, and the quiet of the green Vaudois valleys was still unspotted and calm. By their children's cots the mothers sang, and the maidens sang over their churning and spinning, the old, sweet, monotonous fairy-songs. Sometimes the young voices sang in question and answer. One would take the fairy's part—

"What are you doing here, you fair little bride?"

And the sister would answer—

"I have lost my way; I have torn my frock beside.
I have lost my way in the gorse; it tore my feet,
And never, never I 'll reach the village street."

And the first voice would ring out clear again—

"Come, little shepherdess, come; it is not near;
Yet, reach your hand and come along, my Dear."

Or in her long solitudes, when all the household was out of doors and she alone in the dark little house, with the baby at her breast—the mother would sing a strange little song of the Vaudois mountains, with their mists and rainbows, and clouds that suddenly blot the fields from sight and as suddenly pass away. Of course it is all in fairy guise:—

'T was I who saw the fairy;
She stood and spread around
Her misty skirts in vapour
On the crests of Bariound.

Where'er the fairy wandered
A serpent went as well:
A rainbow-coloured serpent,
On the summit of Castel.

Like Traveller's Joy in blossom,
Like snow upon the pass,
She drifted o'er the mountain,
Nor ever touched the grass.

Now all my sheep had rambled.
"Come hither up the steep,
Come hither," cried the fairy,
"And I will find the sheep."*

A timid, gentle, visionary race, they lived in their secluded upland valleys, thankful when the cruel world forgot them for a time. A race of shepherds and martyrs, not of heroes. They could not do battle for their faith and wrestle for centuries with a stronger power, like the indomitable Huguenots of La Rochelle. They could not fight, but they could suffer. And their mild persistence it was impossible to subdue.

In 1530 the tidings of the Reform had penetrated into these quiet valleys. The Vaudois heard with delight that the faith which they had held through pain and death for centuries had arisen, stronger and more able, in the crowded world outside. They opened a correspondence with Bucer and Farel, and in 1536 they formally gave in their adhesion to the Church of Geneva. Thus, the Vaudois thought to strengthen their position; to make themselves more redoubtable to their enemies, and to avoid the introduction of strange doctrines into their belief; for they remembered still, how, in the thirteenth century, the insidious pantheism of Amaury de Bène had won nearly half the

* Muston. See Michet, *Réforme*, Appendix.

Vaudois from their early faith. They took Geneva for a standard and defence. In reality, by allying themselves with the Reform, they made themselves doubly obnoxious in the eyes of Rome.

Since that year of 1536, the Cardinal de Tournon had kept an angry watch upon them. In 1540 he nearly gained his ends. There were at that moment ten thousand Vaudois households. The Cardinal believed he had made a good bag. But, before the writ could be carried out, Francis had projected his alliance with the Porte, in which case he would need to conciliate the German Lutheran princes. The King willingly let himself be led by Du Bellay into cancelling the writ. He had no natural taste for murder; and he was glad to let these Vaudois live; these Vaudois, whom the good King Louis XII. had declared to be better Christians than himself.

But, as soon as the Treaty of Crépy was signed, the Cardinal saw his chance. Political necessity no longer bound the Most Christian King to curry favour with heretics; on the contrary, he was pledged to conciliate Spain, to forward the holy office of the Inquisition. A campaign against the Vaudois would push his chances not only in Heaven but on earth. Thus argued the Cardinal, not without effect; and about Christmas-time he clinched his argument with a most plausible and likely proof of treachery on the part of this nest of heretics. They were not only heretics, but most contumacious rebels, so the Cardinal affirmed. And he assured the King of a plot laid among them, discovered by D'Oppède, the fanatic governor of Provence, to seize the city of Marseilles and make it a centre for heresy and rebellion.

It is scarcely possible that either Francis or the

Cardinal could have believed these simple shepherds capable, or even anxious, to secure a town which had defied the greatest strength of France and Spain. The plea was absurd; but it suited the purpose of the Cardinal to affect belief in it. And the King had not the courage to contradict him. William du Bellay had died the year before. Margaret was away at Alençon, and De Tournon was at hand. The King was weak, ill, sorely in need of peace and quiet. He felt that a proof of his devotion to the Catholic faith was really desirable after his clemency at La Rochelle, and his alliance with the Turks. By the Treaty of Crépy he was bound to crush out heresy, and if the treaty were not carried out, there would be no Milanese for Charles. Besides, if these people were rebels and heretics, they deserved a punishment. So the King let himself be fatally persuaded to a crime which casts an everlengthening horror on his name. On New Year's Day he signed the writ. It was a "revocation" he was told. The King did not read it, but he signed his name.

It was more difficult to procure the other necessary signatures. The Secretary of State refused. He was not old and ill and weak; he had no younger son to place; he could afford a conscience, and refused. The Cardinal made L'Aubespin sign instead. It was necessary also that the Procureur-du-Roi should sign it. He refused. His substitute refused. The Chancellor's signature must also witness the writ, and he again refused. The Cardinal set a chance seal to it and gave it to the messenger of the Parliament of Provence, who stood waiting for it at the door.

When the President, D'Oppède, read the paper, he found it better than a mere revocation of the pardon of

1541. For the writ of 1540 had merely condemned to death the head of every household, confiscated the property of the heretics, ordered every house to be razed, every orchard to be uprooted, every tree to be burned as accursed. But this new writ, which the King had never read, condemned all to death alike : all men and women, children and babies at the breast. The heretics were to be exterminated, root and branch.

D'Oppède no sooner received the writ than swiftly and silently he marched upon the seventeen Vaudois villages. Several of them were situate in the Papal territory of Avignon, but he easily procured permission to invade them in so good a cause. D'Oppède marched on at the head of a strange and ferocious army; they were the soldiers from the galleys whom he led, a fierce and reckless crowd. Yet even they paused when they discovered that no war but sheer slaughter was before them. D'Oppède had, at first, some difficulty in cheering them on to the general pillage, slaughter and rapine. But having once tasted blood, they entered into the spirit of their crusade. They began by destroying Cabrières and Mérindol with fire. All that ran out of the flames were cut down by the soldiery.

In one church four hundred women and children, who had sheltered there, were slaughtered in one day. The rude galley soldiers learned new devices and caprices in the art of murder; they discovered a thousand ways to send a heretic to hell. On they marched, leaving behind them smoking ruins and uprooted orchards, skeletons and corpses, where they had found the pious shepherds content in their fairy-haunted homes. The poor Fantines must have fled aghast from this new world of flames and shrieking. No home was safe; even under the earth the soldiers

found their victims, in the deep recesses of the mountain caves.

The Vaudois, it seemed, were silenced for ever. Even the Cardinal de Tournon was satisfied. And from the whole of Europe went up a tremendous shout of praise or blame.

Spain praised loudly. Spain, continually persecuting two entire nations, the Jews and the Moors; Spain whose *autos* daily sent the smoke of their human sacrifice to the blue heaven; whose Inquisition in forty years condemned over forty thousand heretics; whose armies, in one year (1570), sent fifty thousand Moors to death or slavery; Spain, the cruel, pure-eyed fanatic, piously setting a world in flames for the greater glory of God; Spain applauded.

But Switzerland, Germany, England, the natural allies of France, shrank back from her in horror. The Treaty of Crépy had already done its worst. France was France no longer; France which in 1543 could afford to say, "for the last thousand years and more I have been the haven and refuge of the afflicted and oppressed,"* France, in 1545, became a mere feeble copy and hanger-on of Spain.

Meanwhile, France herself was sorely divided. The Cardinal de Tournon, the Sorbonne, and its adherents triumphed. Margaret must have wept, I think; though, strangely enough, we possess no letter of hers interceding for the hunted Vaudois. Perhaps, in her northern castle, she did not hear the news until too late; the King, we may be sure, would keep silence. Perhaps, remembering the treaty just witnessed, she knew that she had lost the right to intercede.

* *Harangue de Jean de Montluc aux Vénitiens:* Ribier.

Perhaps, believing De Tournon's report, she thought of these Vaudois not as martyrs, but as rebels who would wage a civil war against her brother; and for her brother's sake she could be very hard. We remember the marriage of the brave little Jeanne; and we know that Margaret had no mercy in her heart for those who questioned the authority of the King. But, in any case, she must have been most miserable, whether because her brother's kingdom seemed crumbling to ashes in his hand; or because of a cruel unnecessary sacrifice of innocent lives, a sacrifice that once she might have prevented, and which she had no longer the influence to prevent. These must have been wretched days to Margaret, for her life, it appeared, had been used in vain.

The King himself was aghast, ashamed. When the tidings of the massacre reached him, he sent for D'Oppède; and it required all the influence of De Tournon to save that violent baron from a violent end. Francis declared that his commands had been cruelly exceeded; and though D'Oppède escaped with his life, he left the Court a disgraced and branded man.

The ruins of the Vaudois villages were still warm and smoking, the eagles and vultures still swooped down on the unburied corpses in the trampled Vaudois meadows, the fierce autumn heats made that place of desolation a place of pestilence and danger still, when Francis and his favourite son, the Duke of Orleans (for whose sake all these things were done), set out for Boulogne to make one last effort to recover the port from the English, before signing the treaty with Henry VIII. The plague ravaged the French and English camps, so that more than a hundred soldiers died every day in the huddled army before

Boulogne. There was no time to dig graves for the dead. With a terrible *sang froid* the sick were laid together in thatched huts outside the camp; and then, when all were dead, the walls and roofs were battered down over the corpses, and this was all their burial. No wonder that the dreadful sickness spread throughout the country. Having arrived at Forêt-Moutier, a little town close to Abbeville, the young Duke of Orleans was not pleased with the quarters allotted to him for the night. In the same house he found a finer suite of rooms, and was about to establish himself in them, when the host, in great alarm, begged him to go back to his old lodging, for, in the rooms which he had chosen, several people had lately died of the plague. "Well and good!" cried Charles. "Never a son of France has died of the pest!" And, laughing at the horror of his host, the madcap youth called to his companions to come and show how little he was afraid. The wild young nobles drew their swords, and, tossing on their rapiers the infected pillows of the bed, they played at ball, till the feathers flew all over the room, and covered the rash players as with snow. Aghast the host looked on in the doorway.

When night came on, the young Duke retired to rest in this infected chamber. About two hours later, he awoke with violent thirst and pains in the head and limbs. "I am ill," he cried. "It is the plague, and I shall die." He then asked for a glass of water. For two or three days he lay in thirst, in pain and delirium; Francis lay in another chamber of that house, ill with anxiety and fatigue. But, on the third day, the Duke recovered consciousness, and earnestly requested to see his father. The message was taken, and Francis rose from his bed and declared that he would go. The

Cardinal de Tournon remonstrated in vain, urging that the fever was fatally contagious. But Francis was not to be moved from his purpose; he entered the chamber of his son alone.

The young Duke, haggard, exhausted, could not raise himself upon his pillows. But he bade his attendants lift him up, and, stretching out his arms to the poor, half-fainting King, he cried, "Ah, Sire, I am dying! But now that I see you again, I die content." The effort was too much; the Duke fell back on his pillow, too weak to utter another word. In a few minutes he was dead; and the King, stricken as by a thunderbolt, was carried from the room in a swoon. It was the 13th September 1545.

So ended the fair promises of Crépy; exactly one year and ten days after the signing of the treaty: exactly a year before any benefit could have accrued to France therefrom.

CHAPTER XVI.

NÉRAC IN 1545.

WHILE mourning and remorse filled the Court of France, the little Court of Nérac had settled into the inactive peace of disillusion. Even the sanguine King believed no more in the promise of Francis to restore his kingdom. Even the visionary Queen could hope no longer for the reconciliation of the Church with Luther. Age, with its calms and compromises, was settling over Navarre.

Margaret, with every year becoming more estranged from her husband, with every year more resigned to this estrangement, occupied herself with good works. She spent the greater part of her income in pensions to the poor of her kingdom, charging herself with a little nation of orphans, of afflicted, of aged and decrepit persons, whose living she provided. She sent large sums also to the Lutheran refugees in Switzerland and Germany. On herself she spent very little.

The black dress, edged with fur, the pleated white chemisette, which she had assumed on the death of her baby son, was a fashion from which she had never since departed. Her hair, neatly put away beneath a nun-like coif; her figure, fuller now than in her youth, in its tightly-fitting sober garb; her face, blonde and placid, with its wistful smile; so we know her, in the

portrait of Janet, her court-painter, and brother of the greater Janet. And she seems to us like some calm and gentle abbess, ruling rather a convent than a court. It was, indeed, a quiet and orderly existence which she led, supervising her charities, ordering her household, maintaining an immense correspondence. In the afternoons, as she sat at her broidery (a work in which she excelled), she kept two secretaries by her side. One, on the right, took down her letters from her dictation; and the other wrote the verses she made aloud from time to time in the pauses of her other work.

The mass of poems thus composed—fluent, inconsequent, empty as the verse of an *improvisatore*—was at this time being set ready for publication, and appeared in 1547, under the title of *Les Marguerites de la Marguerite des Princesses*. Here we find not only her early spiritual verses, not only the "Myrouer" which so excited the wrath of the Sorbonne, and which Elizabeth of England translated; not only the charming rondeaux and ballads written to the King in captivity, but verse of a much later date. Margaret had never been so busy with her pen as now that her active influence was in abeyance. In 1542 she had written *La Coche*, a subtle dissertation on the best way of loving, which the praise of Francis inspires for a moment with true poetry and pathetic fervour. In 1544, she had completed the *Heptameron*. And now she was busy writing and revising a whole accumulation: spiritual songs, with a certain faded pathos in them, charming and not quite sincere; long meditations, prayers, and triumphs of a fluent learned piety, well supplied with texts; innocent boarding-school farces, on marriage, on faith as the best physician, on "Too much, plenty,

little, and less" : a sort of insipid rhymed Proverbs not devoid of a pleasant feminine substitute for humour. Also, strange in the midst of these, a savage passionate outburst against the cruelty of the Inquisition; and, bound up with all this medley of old-fashioned piety and sisterly devotion, a series of four Mysteries, interspersed by exquisite and charming Pastorals.

Of these Mysteries, or Comedies, as Margaret prefers to call them, that on the Nativity far excels the three others: the Desert, the Innocents, and the Adoration of the Kings. Nothing more delicate, more sweetly fantastic, than this strange, light, little comedy, this religious operetta. Joseph sings a tripping sort of Vaudeville to welcome the Holy Babe; and then the scene shifts, and the *Bergerie* begins.

The shepherds and shepherdesses of Palestine are sitting on the grass at evening, watching their folded flocks. They relate the work of the day to each other and then lie down to sleep—all in a sort of song—when one of them remarks the unusual brightness of the stars. At this point appears a choir of singing angels who tell of the birth of Christ. Then, when the heavenly voices all are hushed, the wondering youths and maidens sing a Nowell, charming in its light swift touch and dancing metres.

Chorus of Shepherds and Shepherdesses.

Come let us hasten, journeying
To see the Child and Mother bright
Of whom the angels, carolling,
Have sung sweet homilies to-night:
Sing Nowell, let the Nowell ring,
For Christ is given to us outright.

Sophronius and Philitine:
To their poor household let us bring
Of all our store a bounteous freight.
Dorothy: This cheese shall be my plenishing,
In frame of rushes neatly dight.
Chorus: *Sing Nowell, let the Nowell ring,*
For Christ is given to us outright.

Christilla: And I for Mary's nourishing
Have milk new-drawn and creamy white.
Philitine: I'll give my cage: therein shall sing
My bird, to please her, an it might.
Chorus: *Sing Nowell, let the Nowell ring,*
For Christ is given to us outright.

Elpison: These faggots of my gathering
Shall warm them in their wintry plight.
Nephelé: My flute shall be my offering;
The Child shall hear it with delight.
Chorus: *Sing Nowell, let the Nowell ring,*
For Christ is given to us outright.

Sophronius: I'll run upon their heralding,
For I the best know wrong from right.
Philitine: His face I'll kiss, in worshipping.
Christilla: Ah no, the heel's too holy, quite.
Chorus: *Sing Nowell, let the Nowell ring,*
For Christ is given to us outright.

These charming comedies were acted at Nérac, with other farces less innocent and pretty. "*Pour nous divertir, nous faisons moineries et farces*," writes Margaret; and these monkeries, of which the "Inquisitor" alone remains, were, we may well believe, conceived in the spirit of Marot's *Frère Lubin*. They, and her patronage of Lutheran refugees, brought Margaret into such disrepute with the Catholic party that an attempt was made to poison her at her own table; and one day

Henry of Navarre, it is said, weary of these continual troubles, boxed his illustrious consort on the ears, exclaiming, "Madame, you want to know too much!" It was difficult for Margaret to satisfy at once her husband, her brother, her Lutheran teachers, and her own liberal conscience. Sometimes that credulous and tolerant conscience led her sorely astray. In this year of 1545 she sheltered in her hospitable Court two would-be Lutherans, dressed as monks, named Quentin and Pocques. These men speedily rose to eminence at Nérac. Their vague spiritualism, their insidious, amorous mysticism, was quite to the taste of the little Court there. Margaret, ever dense, and now quite bewildered by a long experience of gallantry and mysticism, saw nothing to blame in their tenets. But, after some while, Calvin, at Geneva, hearing of these new lights of Navarre, made inquiries. He was scandalised when he learned the truth. These men, the principals of the infamous sect of Libertines, or Brothers of the Free Spirit, had been exiled from State to State, shunned by all for their impious and monstrous doctrines, for the debauchery and vice of their behaviour. He wrote to the Queen, his old protectress, and let her hear in no honeyed terms what were these ministers of hers. Then Quentin and Pocques, those prosperous refugees, had to be dismissed. But the spirit of moral relaxation, the vague mysticism, which had tolerated their presence, could not be sent as easily away.

For, in the time of political emptiness, in the pause following the death of the Duke of Orleans, Margaret's spirit, no longer braced by the large air of the world's affairs, had become enervated and languid and dreamy. Her visionary disposition asserted itself more and

more. Her imagination, so easily transported, dwelt more and more on subtilised religion and subtilised passion, fused into one strange, all-engrossing mood in that uncritical mind of hers. A pretty tale that Brantôme tells of her at this time gives a sudden insight into this tender and unworldly attitude.

I tell the story almost in Brantôme's words. The brother of Brantôme, Jean de Bourdeille, destined in his youth for the Church, had been sent to Ferrara, then almost a French colony under the Duchess Renée of France, to finish his studies. There he met a charming young French widow, Madame de la Roche, with whom the young seminarist fell passionately in love. He threw up his career, and, bringing his lady to the shelter of Margaret's Court at Nérac, set off to the wars in Piedmont. Six months afterwards Captain de Bourdeille returned. His first visit was to Pau, where his mother was, and also the Queen of Navarre. He met the Queen coming out of church after vespers. She, *la meilleure princesse du monde*, turned, and led him into the deserted church. There for some time they talked together, walking to and fro, speaking of Italy, Piedmont, of the wars, but not a word of Madame de la Roche. Suddenly Margaret stopped, and, seizing the hand of Bourdeille, she said, in a changed voice, "My cousin, do you feel nothing move beneath your feet?" "No, Madame," he replied. "But, think well, my cousin," she insisted. "I have thought, Madame, but nothing moves; for a firm flagstone is underneath my feet." "Then I will tell you," said the Queen. "You are over the tomb and the body of that poor young Madame de la Roche, who is buried here beneath you, and whom you loved so much. And since our souls still feel

after our death, you must not doubt that this honest creature, dead for your sake, felt a thrill as soon as you stepped upon her grave. And if you did not feel it, because of the thickness of the tomb, you must not doubt but it was real. And since it is a pious office to hold the dead in memory, and even those whom one has loved, I pray you to give her a *Paternoster*, an *Ave Maria*, and a *De Profundis*, and to sprinkle her with holy water. And thus you will acquire the name of a very faithful lover and a good Christian. I will leave you, then, for that, and go away."

In such a mood as this—tenderly cynical, melancholy, dreamy—Margaret ruled over her Court of Navarre in these latter days of general *désœuvrement* which followed on the death of Charles of Orleans.

CHAPTER XVII.

DEATH OF THE KING.

"The Queen of Navarre looks very delicate," wrote Marino Cavalli in 1542, "so delicate, I fear she has not long to live. Yet she is so sober and moderate, that after all she may last. She is, I think, the wisest not only of the women but of the men in France. No one knows more than she, either of the conduct of State affairs or of the secrets of religion. But I fear she is nigh to death."

With every year she had grown a little weaker, but still she was alive. So long as her brother lived, Margaret believed she could not die, nor continue living after his decease. In this winter of 1545 she was far from him in Béarn, tortured with rheumatism, sleeplessness, and fever; weakening with the slow consumption that wore away her life. But all her thoughts were for Francis. She did not complain, sitting between her two secretaries, dictating her letters to the one, and to the other her stories or her verses. But they could tell when her pain was hard to bear, for she would start up crying, "I fear the King is worse," and anxiously look out along the snowy roads to see if any courier were on the way from Paris. So firmly convinced was her loving heart, that she and

her brother held their lives and sufferings in common. Indeed, the King was very ill that year. He could not rest in that palace which it had been the great business of his life to adorn. He found no consolation now in the "fayre tables with histories right finely wrought," which only a few years ago he had shown with such leisurely triumph and delight to the astounded Wallup. He could not sleep now in the Royal bed-chamber, which, wrote Wallup, "I do assure your Majestie is very singulier, as well with antycall borders as with a costly seeling and chemney." And when he walked in the gallery, where were Cellini's statues and Primaticcio's casts, "the most magnifique gallereye I had ever seen with, betwixt every windowe, great antycall personages standing entier," doubtless King Francis remembered how he had shown these treasures also, a little while ago, to his good friend and guest and brother-in-law, the Emperor.

All of Francis's life was poisoned by his enmity of Charles. He laid plans and schemes for beginning the war again, and on a grander scale than heretofore. Between the winter of 1545 and the winter of 1546, he traversed the frontier of his kingdom, inspecting every town in Burgundy and Champagne, hurrying on the work of fortification, himself distributing the necessary moneys. For war seemed imminent at any moment, though Francis, weary and disheartened, was readier for enmity than for actual battle; but in the early spring of 1549 he received a shock which sent all thoughts of a campaign far from his spirit for the time.

On the 28th of January Henry of England died. This news was a thunderbolt for Francis, who, since

the English treaty, had slipped back into his old terms of friendship with his neighbour. They were of the same age and the same constitution. They had known each other from youth up, each was gallant and frank, though the lovable lightmindedness of Francis incurred the contempt of Henry's brutal strength. And ever since the memorable day when Francis had forced his way into the King of England's tent on the Field of the Cloth of Gold, the French King had entertained a true liking for his neighbour, which outlasted many a sudden quarrel and breach of the peace. In one profound sentence, Gaillard has condensed the relations of Francis with his neighbours: "Charles V. greatly injured Francis and disliked him little; Francis hated him, and loved Henry VIII., by whom he was hated, and who was jealous of him."

In the last days of January our English Henry died, and by the end of February Francis was seriously ill. He had contracted a slow fever, which day by day consumed his long-diminished strength. He tried to brace himself against its ravages, but the means he took to strengthen his frame only left it weaker. The chace, his life-long passion, possessed him with redoubled craving at the last. He wandered from place to place, from province to province; hunting through all his forests all day long; himself, all night, a prey to agony and fever.

Always ill, always weaker, always in the saddle, he led his weary court from St. Germain to La Muette, thence to Villepreux and Dampierre, then on to Limosin, where he meant to pass the carnival. But after a rest of two or three days, his fever hunted him on. The air did not suit him in that place. In a milder atmosphere he thought he might be stronger; so,

scarcely able to travel, he led his retinue to Loches in Touraine. He was no better. He was, indeed, so much weaker, that for some while he was compelled to sojourn there; and when he was able to set out again, he decided to turn his face homewards, and made for St. Germain, his favourite and usual resort.

On the way thither, he had to pass Rambouillet, where he determined to rest for a night. But, on arriving there, he remembered many a glorious day in youth, when he had hunted the boar through the forests round the castle. He ordered a great boar-hunt for the morrow. The courtiers, with the Dauphin at their head, waited anxiously on that morning, wondering if the King would appear. The agonies that his abscess had caused him, the prostration that had laid him low at Loches, his unfixed, hesitating and uncertain mind, all rendered it unlikely. But, lo! down the great staircase comes the King, something of his old majesty in the poise of his unwieldy figure, and in his swollen altered features a little of their youthful grace and animation. It is as though the hero of Christendom, the Francis of Marignano and Pavia were alive again; the Francis whose prowess in war and in the chace was the theme of every Court in Europe. All day long this fair deceitful mirage lasts. The horn winds, the hounds yelp, the hunters ride through the glades of the green forest; and Francis is first of all, swiftest and most vigorous. Like a man under a charm, he feels neither fatigue nor anguish, neither the languor of his wasting fever nor the darting and throbbing of his wound.

All day he hunts; but, on returning to the castle, he is so prostrate, that he at once retires to sleep.

A healthy fatigue, no doubt; in the morning he will be stronger.

Alas! hour by hour his fever increased, the pangs of his internal wound became more and more intolerable. What expiation there may be in personal suffering was his at the last; no Vaudois suffered more than he that night, no Berquin in his chariot of fire. Suddenly all pain ceased. The abscess had begun to mortify, and his physicians announced to Francis that he had not many hours to live.

Francis thereupon sent for the Dauphin, and commended his kingdom to him in words so wise and sober, they make us marvel the monarch ruled no better who could advise so well. *Never recall Montmorency, keep in check the Guises, diminish the taxes.* Such were the dying counsels of the King, counsels that, if followed, would have averted twenty years of civil wars, the ruin of the Valois, and the massacre of St. Bartholomew. He also recommended the Cardinal de Tournon and Admiral d'Annebaut to the good offices of his son. And having rid himself of earthly cares, he died, a firm Catholic, free from pain at the last, on the 31st of March 1547, in the fifty-third year of his age. It is with a shock that we find him still so young. During the last seven years of his life, he had been not merely old, but superannuated.

More than a fortnight lapsed before Margaret heard of her brother's death. None dared to tell her of that last, most dread calamity. All the winter long she had been ailing and in great distress about her brother. Her ladies often discovered her in tears; and she would tell them that she feared the King was very ill, and, should he die, she was sure she would not long survive him. It was a severe winter; so cold,

that for weeks together the delicate, declining Queen, could not leave her special suite of rooms in the great castle of Pau. The deep snows retarded the arrival of the couriers from Paris, for whose coming Margaret watched and feared and hoped all day and all night. The close, pent-up life, the long suspense, told heavily on her fragile constitution, and deepened her consumptive taint.

With the breaking of the frosts, Margaret went from Pau to the convent of Tusson, in the Angoumais, in order to pass the season of Lent in retreat among the nuns. Her constant and growing anxiety haunted her there no less than in the world. The fasts and vigils of Lent weakened her yet more, and rendered her ever visionary brain peculiarly subject to dreams and hallucinations. Early in April she dreamed one night that the King came and stood by her bedside. His face was pale and ghastly; and in a thrilling anguished voice he called upon her twice: "My sister! my sister!" Margaret awoke in dismay. She rose and forthwith despatched her messengers to Rochefort, where she believed the King to be. During the anxious days of waiting that ensued, she withdrew from the placid company of the nuns, whose peace was a reproach to her feverish heart. Day after day, and yet no answer came. Day after day; for, in truth, the King was dead.

No one dared to tell his sister; they knew her passionate affection and feared the stroke. But the suspense all but cost the poor Queen her reason. A week after her messengers had gone, and when the King had been a fortnight dead, the same vision appeared to her in sleep. This time Margaret awoke almost distracted. She sent for her attendants and

questioned them earnestly, almost fiercely. They did not venture to leave her in so frenzied a mood; and invented well-meaning lies among themselves, assuring her the King was well, was better, much better. Only half-convinced, Margaret rose, and, having despatched another messenger, passed towards the convent chapel. She was still in the cloisters, giving a last direction to her secretary, when she heard, from a distant corner of the cloister, a sound of very bitter weeping. Margaret, ever compassionate, went swiftly to the place; her secretary and some of her attendants following her. On the step of the cloister sat a poor crazy nun, a harmless, gentle creature allowed to roam the convent at her will; she sat there, poor innocent, weeping so violently that her sobs echoed far and wide through the resounding cloister. Margaret came up to the distracted mourner. "What is it, my sister," said the Queen, "that you deplore?" At the sound of that gentle voice the poor demented girl stopped her weeping; she looked up and said, "For you, Madame, I weep for you!" Then, rising swiftly to her feet, she covered her face in the folds of her veil and fled from the spot. The Queen stayed there, rigid and still as stone; she had grown very white. Then, turning to her attendants, "God," she said, at last, "has revealed to me through this poor mad-woman what you would vainly conceal. The King is dead."

Without tears or more ado, she sought her chamber, and, kneeling on the floor, dwelt long and earnestly in prayer. She sought no human help or sympathy. She only entreated to be left alone. That prayer should be granted; henceforth, indeed, the loving, ardent sister should be quite alone.

While Margaret was kneeling on the floor of her convent cell, weeping for her loss and praying for her dead brother, her brother passionately loved and desperately mourned, the Court of France, with the Dauphin at its head, scarcely cared to conceal its rejoicing. The old *régime* was quickly buried away. Queen Leonor prepared to leave her land of exile and retired to her own familiar home of Brussels. The Duchess d'Étampes was disgraced; the crown-diamond which Francis had given her was taken from her and given to the triumphant Diana, and Anne herself was banished to her husband's castle and her husband's revengeful guardianship. De Tournon and d'Annebaut were dismissed the Court. Montmorency was recalled; favours and honours were heaped upon him. He and the Guises were set at the head of affairs. The four hundred thousand crowns which Francis, despite his magnificence, had saved for the good of the State, were swiftly spent among the sombre favourites of Henry II.

Never recall Montmorency, check the Guises, diminish the taxes, the dying King had said.

Nor was this all. A terrible scene disgraced the royal funeral—a scene noticed by few, heard only by the nearest bystanders, but of which the reflection and the echo have survived until our time. The coffins of the Dauphin and of the young Duke Charles, not yet inhumed, were carried in one convoy with the King's to the royal vault at St. Denis. Francis and the two sons he loved made that last sad journey together. And Henry, the new King, looking on as the solemn funeral wound along the streets before him, watched the procession with a significant smile. Pointing to the coffin of the Duke of Orleans, he leaned to one

of his courtiers, and asked, "See you that rascal? He opens the vanguard of my felicity."

So, unregretted, the King's funeral passes on. Guise and Diana laugh together, quietly, but from the heart. "He is gone!" they say; "the old gallant!" and Henry enters into his felicity. Meanwhile, at Tusson, Margaret weeps and prays; and, in Madrid, the Emperor surprises the messenger who brings him the news by an outburst of grief for the death of his captive of yore. "He is gone!" cries Charles, like Guise and Diana; but with how different an accent. "He is gone, the great prince! I think that Nature will not make his like again." Charles takes the loss to heart; even as Francis sorrowed for Henry of England. The news leaves him old and lustreless. He has lost his rival and his captive; his brother and his noblest adversary.

Thus Francis rests at St. Denis, between the coffins of his sons. His heir makes merry over his burial; and, relates Dandolo, who wrote from France that year, "just so pallid and melancholy as he was, does he now seem cheerful and well-coloured. The young Cardinal de Guise is the very heart and spirit of him, and negotiates all State affairs with the King."

So little were the counsels of Francis remembered. Only his sister mourns and weeps. She alone, and the Emperor who ruined him.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE END.

The King was dead; but life still went on full of pressing needs and sordid complications. Margaret's belief had proved fallacious; her brother was dead and she was still alive. Nay, rich as was the past in dear and solemn memories, she had little time to brood on it. Never had the present called her with so urgent, vulgar, and clamorous a voice. For, not only her brother was dead, but the King her patron; with him her royal pensions, her influence, her authority, died too. And even in the first flush of her grief Margaret had to set her mind to saving what she could from the general disaster.

The death of her brother left her with scarcely sufficient money to cover her yearly expenses; for, though her revenues were large, her generosity was larger. Spending little on herself—very little, as we shall see—she had always chosen to give away the surplus, not to save it. Hitherto there had seemed small need for thrift, for Francis had always shared abundantly with his Mignonne. Now he was dead, and Margaret's expenses were greater than at any

former time. The young Princess Jeanne, at this time a handsome and piquante brunette of seventeen, was living at the court of Francis. Fond of splendour and gaiety, extravagant and wilful, she maintained an almost royal establishment in Paris. Her mother's letters are frequent to M. d'Izernay, the governor of Jeanne's household, and in all of them she beseeches him to check the ruining course of her thoughtless girl's expenditure; "for the King of Navarre and I do find it insupportable, and deem that it is impossible it should continue long, since we have not the means to defray it; and the said lord has told me that, being at Paris, he found the expenses of my daughter marvellously great, wherefore I warned you of it, as I do again, beseeching you, M. d'Izernay, to stay your hand; for, with the expenses that I have already, I could not find the means to support this extra charge."

Jeanne, however, does not appear to have made any retrenchments, for, in the ten months of the next year her housekeeping absorbed the whole of her mother's yearly pension, £25,000 Tournois (about £2,100 English), without counting her pin-money (£3,250), and the cost of her trousseau (£5,213). To the gay, high-spirited, charming girl at court, ambitious, and one of the prettiest princesses of her age, the remonstrances of her mother appeared ignorant and ill-founded. Of course, down in Nérac it was difficult to understand the necessary expenses of a royal princess in Paris. So Jeanne attempted to persuade her mother, assuring Margaret that she could not spare one of the officers of her household, for her state was only the legitimate splendour of a *fille à la suite de la cour*.

Meanwhile, the very continuance of this pension which Jeanne was so amply spending was yet unde-

cided. Yet it is characteristic of Margaret's generous temper that when, at this anxious moment, Henry offered to liquidate a debt of £4,885 Tournois, which had been lent to his father by Margaret and the Duke of Alençon, Margaret refused to receive the money, and insisted that it should be paid to her dead husband's sisters, the Marchioness of Montferrat and the Duchess of Vendôme. She was herself in great straits. Pressed by her urgent need, she wrote from Pau to M. d'Izernay (13th June 1547) :—

"The King of Navarre will leave on Friday, after the Feast of St. John, and take his daughter back to Court with him; and I shall go to Mont de Marsan, and keep house so thriftily that everyone will stare. It is not necessary that you should take the trouble to come to me just yet, for reasons that I will tell you so soon as I am there; and also because you do me a much greater service in soliciting my affairs at Court; of which the greatest is the assurance of my xxv. thousand pounds Tournois; for, as you know, without them it would be impossible for me to maintain my state, and I have no more in reserve than will pay this year's expenses—and one may well believe it is not my custom, without sore necessity, to ask any favour. And, if I had father, mother, brother, uncle, or kinsman, I would pray them to be my advocates. But, since it has pleased the King (Henry II.) to promise to be all these things to me, it will not in any wise vex him that I demand his aid; for, without his grace and goodness I could not live at all, having in this world no other wealth than that which the King (Francis I.) and he have given me; and I have always been as content therewith as if I had had a great share of the revenues of my House.

Henry confirmed the pension, and asked Margaret to stand sponsor to his new-born child, treating her with a kindness and regard that would go far to endear his memory, did we not suspect an aim in reserve, an object which made it worth his while to conciliate. Margaret suspected nothing. She was profoundly touched by his goodness, and by a friendly and magnanimous letter which Constable de Montmorency had the fine tact to send her on his reinstatement in power. That Montmorency should be the advocate of the Queen of Navarre, who had been the instrument of his fall, was indeed a heaping of coals of fire upon her head. She scarcely knew how sufficiently to confess her humility. She wrote :—

"My Nephew,

"You will not find it strange if incessantly I thank you as you incessantly give me occasion, for, by the message this porter has brought me, I see clearly that time has had no victory over your remembrance, to be able to efface the affection that, since your childhood, I have borne you; and the like I pray you to continue until the end of your old mother, and be you to her the staff of her age, as she was the rod of youth to you. For you have had many friends, but, remember, you have had but one mother, who will never lose this name or character in all that she may do or desire for you or yours."

So Margaret wrote to Montmorency, gratefully smiling through her tears, and wrote to Henry that he is the "life, health, and repose of her spirit." Meanwhile, Montmorency, under Henry's orders, was opening all the letters and packets addressed to the

Queen and King of Navarre, in search of complaint, or a treasonable plan to frustrate the King's arrangement for their daughter's marriage.

Henry had inherited his father's fears lest the King of Navarre should marry his only daughter to the heir of Spain. It seemed so natural a match, and one that would set so old a feud at rest, that the King of France did not feel himself secure till Jeanne of Navarre was given to a husband of his choice. France, not Spain, must acquire Navarre; it was too dangerous an outpost to yield to the enemy. Therefore, little Jeanne had been taken away from her father and mother and brought up as a French princess; therefore, she had been married, against her will, to the Duke of Cleves. Since that marriage had been dissolved, the old peril was nearer than before. Her gaiety and spirit gave a great charm to this girl, known in Paris as the Darling of Kings, and her father had always ardently desired the Spanish match. Henry determined to marry Jeanne at once.

The husband that he chose for her was rich, noble, the son of her mother's dearest friend, Françoise d'Alençon. Antoine de Bourbon, the Duke of Vendôme, held the first rank in France, after the King's children. If he were suspected of Lutheran tendencies, that was but another passport to the favour of the Queen of Navarre. In choosing him for Jeanne, Henry had done well by his little niece, with her dowry of a poverty-stricken and confiscated kingdom. Yet Margaret passionately opposed the match. Both she and her husband so disliked the mere thought of it, that we are tempted to believe they had really set their hearts on Philip of Spain for their son-in-law.

Henry of France certainly believed this, and he was strenuous in urging on the Bourbon marriage.

Meanwhile, the King of Navarre, too weak to openly oppose the plan, impotently tried to shuffle out of it. His nephew sent for him to Paris; but first he was detained at Pau by the affairs of Madame de Laval. Then he was ill, with a long intermittent illness which forced him to stay at home. Nobody believed much in these excuses, and at last the King of France got hold of his shuffling and irresolute opposer. Then the affair was quickly decided. The French King wrote to Montmorency, in letters that have something of the expression of his face after youth—something embittered, discordant, and cynical: —"I have got quit of him (the King of Navarre) cheaper than I thought. I grant him only 15,000 francs a year for the government of his kingdom. That is less than I offered him by Monge, for, if you remember, I had offered him ten thousand crowns. . . . It is true there is no love lost between my good Aunt and her husband—never any couple were less united; and she already far from loves her son-in-law. The King of Navarre will swear by nothing but the allegiance that he owes me, and I trust his protestations just as much as I ought. . . . They are very poor. I don't believe that altogether they have ten gentlemen-in-waiting. The King has beseeched me to appoint him a lieutenant; I said I would think of it. It seems to me this is a very different thing from determining to choose one himself, as he used to declare. . . . There is no further need that you should open the packets addressed to the King and Queen of Navarre. After all, there is nothing to make it worth your while. The King of

Navarre told me he knew very well that his wife was the cause of his not receiving all his packets."

In these letters, and fragments of letters, we perceive the lessened authority of Margaret and her husband. Their opposition was not likely, now, to frustrate any plan of the King.

Meanwhile, Jeanne was brilliantly happy. She had so little affection for her mother that Margaret's sorrow touched her not at all. She had made a brilliant marriage, and had made it in France, with a man of her own language and her own manners; these had ever been the chief of her ambition. Antoine de Bourbon was vacillating, uncertain, timid. But he was better than the Duke of Cleves. He was rich, amiable, of the highest rank. Jeanne set about the pleasant extravagances of her trousseau with a merry heart. "I never saw so happy a bride," said Henry II. to Montmorency.

Meanwhile, Margaret continued her unaccountable opposition. She was deeply attached to Jeanne; but her daughter's happiness did not change her. Perhaps she foresaw how little fitted was the vacillating and fickle temper of Vendôme to guide her daughter's headstrong, courageous nature. More likely the long depression which took possession of her on her brother's death rendered her incapable of pleasure. It was sorely against her will that she joined the French Court at Lyons, proceeding thence to Moulins, where, on the 20th of October 1548, Jeanne d'Albret, the future mother of Henry IV., was married.

The festival, though not so fine as that which graced the unlucky nuptials of the Duke of Cleves, was still a splendid sight, celebrated *avec toute espèce de festins, joyeusetés et pompes royales.* The King of

France was present. The Duke of Vendôme—though at the last thinking with disrelish of Jeanne's earlier bridal—showed himself a generous lover, and settled £100,000 Tournois upon the bride. Jeanne was as merry as her marriage-bells. Yet Margaret persisted in her displeasure, and only at her nephew's express command would affix her signature to the marriage-contract.

The King of Navarre sullenly content to be outwitted at so good a price; Margaret miserable, dejected, angry with her husband, and lavishing unanswered love upon her girl; Jeanne thoughtless, delighted, accepting with laughter the good gifts of Fortune, and blind to the disappointment and vexed ambitions that surrounded her: this is the family portrait that we find in the letters of Henry II.

"I never saw so joyous a bride," he wrote to Montmorency; "she never does anything but laugh. I have heard that the King of Navarre intends to go to Nevers, taking his daughter. I have not determined to refuse them the permission, for it seems to me that, having married their daughter, I have the best hostage they can give. He pretends to be the best-contented father in the world—you know the man! But from all I can learn from him, and from many others, now that his daughter is really married, he thinks of nothing but amassing a large fortune and making good cheer. . . . The Queen of Navarre is at daggers drawn with her husband, through her love for her daughter, who, for her part, makes no account of her mother. You never saw anyone cry so much as my Aunt when she went away, and, if it had not been for me, she would never have gone back with her husband."

It is difficult to account for these tears. In Margaret's nature ambition was scarcely so eminent a factor that she should break her heart over what, after all, was a fair match for her daughter. The Estates of Béarn had long ago pleaded that their princess should marry no stranger, but rather some great French noble who would strengthen her hands at home. So that this marriage pleased the King of France, the bride herself, and the subjects of the bride. There was nothing personally to object to in Antoine de Bourbon; he was chivalrous and gentle, though weak in disposition. In fact, there was no cause, no reason, for Margaret's grief. The string strained too tight had broken, that was all. A constitutional melancholy, sharply accented by her brother's death, grew stronger and stronger on her, day by day, blotting all the world from her in a thick haze of cloud and misery, till it ended, even as did the melancholy of Francis, in lethargy and death.

Margaret had gone to Fontainebleau, but she found little comfort there in the court of Diana, where everything reminded her of the buried past. She returned to Pau for Christmas with her husband, and thence, for her health's sake, she went to Mont de Marsan. She was getting very weak; a religious misery took hold of her. She did not share her husband's pleasure in wealth and good cheer. She lived very quietly and simply, spending much of her time in that convent of Tusson where she had learned her brother's death. But now, in any place, it was a nun's life that she led. We find her expenses for the year 1548 entered in her account book; exclusive of pensions, loans, and donations to the poor, they do but reach the sum of £220 Tournois.

For pins, nine livres, 15 sols.
Six wooden combs, each £0 $36.
For gold and silver for her needlework, Three marks.
For a gold chain to be given away, £175.
For the deed of a loan to M. de Rohan, £4.
For New Year's gifts to the King of Navarre, £30.

That is the slender amount. Margaret had done with the world and with worldly gear. She had a lodging built for her in the convent at Tusson, and went there in 1549 to spend her Lent in retreat; but the life suited her so well, she stayed the summer there. Her leaning towards reform was no obstacle in her love for this conventual routine. It was because she loved the Church that she had wished to chasten it. She had no desire, as we have said, to establish a sect outside the Roman pale; only to keep a spirit of national life in the Church of France, to keep it French, while admitting the authority of Rome. So Margaret lived in peace of conscience at Tusson. Not, alas! in peace of mind. Her growing weakness sorely distressed her; and when her physicians told her that the end was near, she wept, and found their saying a very bitter word. Her attendants reminded her of the glory of the saints in Paradise. The Queen was not consoled.

"All that is true," she said. "But we stay so long a time under the earth before our coming there." And then she began to weep and ask why must she die; she was not yet so old but that she might well live a few years more. They could not appease her horror of death, her curiosity concerning the fate of the soul. One of the dearest of her maids of honour falling ill

and lying near to death, Margaret persisted in sitting by her bed. Knowing the disgust for mortality which she had inherited from her mother, her maidens begged the Queen to let them lead her away; her presence could not save the poor dying girl. But it was not affection that made the reluctant Queen vanquish her instinctive horror; that kept her sitting by the bed, silent, motionless, looking at the face of the sufferer so fixedly, so strangely, that her women marvelled among themselves. At last, when all was over, one ventured to ask the meaning of that look. Then Margaret told them she had heard from learned doctors how, at the actual moment of dissolution, the spirit leaves the body, and she had looked for the soul and listened to catch the faintest sound or rustle. And she said these learned men had told her how the swan sings itself to death for love of the soul that travaileth up its long throat towards the issue. To catch this issuing soul she had narrowly watched the lips of the dying girl; but she had seen nothing, heard nothing, felt nothing.

"And were I not firm in my faith," she said, "I should not know what to think of this dislodging and departing of the soul." Then she went back to her weeping and her praying, shuddering at the mystery of death, striving to see beyond the visible, evident grave, the distant Paradise. "But ah! we stay so long under the earth before our coming there!"

The summer dragged away, and every month left Margaret weaker. With the autumn she moved to Odos, a castle near the city of Tarbes. Here sprang wells of mineral water, said to cure diseases of the chest. Margaret drank them, but they did not dispel her languor. She grew weaker and weaker. Her

melancholy deepened into apathy. She fell into a drowsiness from which her physicians could not rouse her. The heart, so hungry for emotions, the eager intellect, the generous sympathies, the poignant vitality of her nature; all these slept a deep slumber now. But through her stupor she dreamily wondered on the nature and fate of spirits. That was her preoccupation.

One night she dreamed that a very beautiful woman approached her bed, bearing in her hands a wreath of flowers—flowers of every sort that blow—and these, the angel said, were freshly gathered for Margaret to wear in Paradise. The Queen woke a little consoled. She had always put her trust in signs and visions. On the faith of a dream she could believe in Paradise.

A few days after this, a great comet was seen in the sky at night. The rumour went that it appeared for the death of Paul III. the Pope. Margaret, who had heard this tale, stood on an open balcony, looking at the blazing heaven, with the wintry stars in it, and the meteor flung across the blue. Standing there she must have remembered that other and more brilliant comet which appeared before her mother's death at Grèz-en-Gatinois. Margaret was ever superstitious. Suddenly her mouth was drawn a little awry. Her physician seeing this, persuaded her to go indoors, and to bed. He lost no time in treating her; but the December night had chilled her through; the spectacle of the comet had taken her courage away, and she felt persuaded she would die. The chill settled on her delicate lungs, and for three days she could not speak; but a few moments before the last she found her voice again. She caught at a cross which lay upon the bed, and, crying three times "Jesus! Jesus! Jesus!" in her

stifled voice, she died. The story of de Rémond that she died a Catholic, declaring that she had helped the oppressed Reformers rather from compassion than conviction, has been received with great distrust and anger by the Lutheran historians, from the earliest chroniclers to Miss Freer. It seems to me no truer words could resume the character of Margaret: compassion not conviction. It is at once the rarest value and the limitation of her nature. Hence her sweet, large-hearted mercy, understanding and forgiving all men. Hence, also, her weakness, her lack of a firm standpoint, her hesitations and indecisions. Hence that signal bane of her influence over Francis, "the flux and reflux of uncertain authority," as Gaillard has turned the phrase.

Margaret of Angoulême died at the Castle of Odos, December 21, 1549, at the age of fifty-seven. Her reign was over. She who had been for a lifetime the influence and ideal of the most civilised court in Europe was no more. In all but sheer existence she had died two years ago, when her brother breathed his last at Rambouillet. A different ideal was now set up in her place, a different influence swayed the heart of the King of France:—a woman, two years older than herself, whom some magic, as it seemed, preserved from age. The orb of Diana filled the earth with its pale, cold, romantic, and illusive light. The moon had arisen, and reigned over an altered world; a world without colour, at once vague and hard, all black and white; a world of superstition, of phantasmal ghosts and fears; a world of enchantment, a new Armida's garden, where the young adore the old, where a courtesan is honoured as widowed Fidelity, where Probity is avaricious, treacherous, and a bigot. A moonlit world,

where the false and the true are equally shadows: the world of Diana and of Montmorency.

It was best that Margaret should die. She had no place in the new order of things; she could neither change them nor sympathise with them. Her sun had set, and the moonlight dazzled her. She, poor sunflower, could not live without the sun. "*Mourut par trop aymer d'amour grande et naïfve.*"

Margaret was buried in the cathedral at Lescar, the last resting-place of the House of Navarre. It was observed that Montmorency sent no representative to the crowded funeral. But the poor of all the states of Béarn congregated round the solemn procession, and through all the world the men of learning and the poets poured out in rhyme and epitaph their sorrow for her loss. They, indeed, would feel her death as the sudden rattling-down of a buckler that had ever been held between them and their enemies. With more truth than befits an epitaph, Olhagaray declared, "all the learned, weary of living, succumbed at that blow." The Queen who had saved Roussel and Lefêbvre, Calvin, Farel, and Clément Marot, the protectress of Erasmus and Melancthon, the learned muse who inspired the King to found the College of France, *la Marguerite des Marguerites*, merited so fine a commendation.

Henry of Navarre mourned his wife's death, notwithstanding all their jealousies and quarrels. Without her, his petulant and vacillating character was as a ship without ballast. Day by day he became more feeble and variable, changing his mind from moment to moment, till finally the reins of government were handed over to Jeanne and her husband, who ruled the country well.

So Margaret passed out of life: others took up her tasks and filled her place. But her humane and gentle influence was gone for ever. In the brief and violent history of the House of Valois no other Egeria shines.

She is dead, and all her works are dead, or only live a little dimly on the shelves of historians and bibliophiles. But oblivion will never cover her memory. Rather, as the sphere of history widens, will the appreciation of her rare influence increase. Without her, the noblest part of the Renaissance in France must have perished at the Inquisition stakes. She made learning possible; and secured for a time a relative freedom of thought. She taught respect for life in an age which only respected opinions. Her strong national feeling was for years a bulwark against the invasion of Spanish superstition. She showed that compassion is larger than conviction; charity more honourable than faith. Her character was not great. It lacked decision, strength, moral judgment, and the splendour of mental purity. But her impassioned sweetness made it beautiful and rare. Her mercy and magnanimity were the saving of a nation. For this, and not for her novels or her poems, she will be remembered.

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